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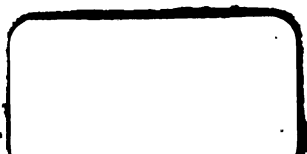
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Caribou

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11:1. 20th Ch. Exodus, V 8th...

Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

11:2. Psalm 37th V 4th

Delight thy self in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart.

11:3. — 10 Ch. St. Matthew V. 30th

The very Hairs of your Head are all numbered.

11:4th — Psalm 145th V. 20th

The Lord preserveth all them that love him; but scattereth abroad all the Ungodly.

11:5. — 18 Ch. Ezekiel, V 28th

Because he considereth, and turneth a way from all his Iniquities, which he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

11:6th — 4th Ch. Daniel, V. 30th

The King spake and said, — To wit this great Babylon that I have built for the House of my Kingdom, by the Might of Power, and for the Honor of my Majesty.

11:7th — 20th Ch. St. Matthew, V. 48th

These shall go in to everlasting punishment, but the Righteous in to Life eternal.

11:8. — 5th Ch. St. Matthew V. 10th

Blessed are they that are persecuted for Righteousness sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

11:9. — 52. Psalm 52th V. 15th

Why boasted thou thy self in Mischief, O naughty Man.

11:10. Christmas day. — 11th Ch. Timothy 1st Epistle V. 15th

This is a faithful Saying, and Worthy of Acceptance that Christ Jesus came in to the World to save Sinners.

11:11. Psalm 45th, V. 7th

Thou hast put Gladness in my Heart, more than in the Time that their Corn and their Wine increased.

11:12. — 4th Ch. Jeremiah, V. 18th

Thy Way and thy Doings have procured these Things unto thee, this is thy Wickedness, because it is bitter, because it riseth unto thine Heart.

He looks for a City, which hath Foundations, whose
Builder and Maker is God.

71° 14) 15 (Chapt. 1st Epistle Corinthians verse 34th

"Awake to Righteousness and sin not."

71° 15) 15 (Chapt. 1st Epistle Corinthians Verse 33rd

71° 16) 18 (Chapt. St. Luke Verse 19th

Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is God.

71° 17) 13 (Chapt. John Verse 35th

By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples,
if ye love one another

71° 18) 2 (Chapt. Zephaniah Verse 3rd

Such Righteousness, such Meekness; it may be ye shall
be hid in the Day of the Lords - Anger:

71° 19) 4 (Chapt. Mark Verse 24th

Take heed what you hear:

71° 20) 3 (Chapt. 1st Sam. Verse 18th

It is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good:

71° 21) 8 (Chapt. St. Mark Verse 34th

He said unto them, who soever will come after me, let him
deny him self, and take up his cross, and follow me:

71° 22) 139 (Verse 4th

There is not a Word in my Tongue, but to! O Lord, thou
knowest it altogether:

71° 23) 22 (Chapt. Job Verse 23rd

If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up,
thou shalt put away Iniquity far from thy Tabernacles:

71° 24) 3 (Chapt. 1st Epistle Peter Verse 16th

Having a good Conscience; that where as they speak evil
of you, as of evil Doers, they may be ashamed that falsely
accuse your good Conversation in Christ:

71° 25) 10th (Chapt. Acts 3rd Verse 17th)
opened his Mouth, and said, of a Truth I perceive that
there is no respect of Persons:

Rob^t. Davison's Book.

MANUSCRIPT SERMONS,

O N

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

Chiefly designed for the

P U L P I T;

And as such, to render them of general Use, are adapted
to the weakest Understanding.

By the REV. D. P A P E,
LECTURER in MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND.

" For there is no Respect of Persons with God."

Printed for the A U T H O R,
By T. S A I N T, N E W C A S T L E.

MDCCLXXXVII.

E R R A T A.

No. 7, Page 9, Line 14, read, the Beasts that perish,
by confining, &c.

No. 8, Page 11, Line 15, read, Patiently bears even
Persecution, for Righteousness Sake.

No. 23, Page 10, Line 6, read, a virtuous Temper.

No. 31, Page 6, Line 12, read, a lively Perception.

No. 37, Page 7, Line 15, instead of forgot by Moses;
read, perhaps not rightly understood by Moses.



✕

(No. 1.) 20th Chapter Exodus, Verse 8th.

“Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.”

This is a Request that we should always bear in Mind;—for the Sabbath is that one important Day in Seven, which is appointed, and should carefully be set apart, for the immediate Concerns of the Soul.—On this Day, we should not only cease from our ordinary Callings,—our daily Labors, and Business of Life,—But, as the fourth Commandment dictates, we should sanctify it, by an unspotted Conversation, and Purity of Manners:—Thus, the Jews themselves observed it—they did not think themselves justifiable in a total Cessation from worldly Employments, except they turned their Minds to the Exercise of those Pursuits, which are well-pleasing to Almighty God.—Tho’ the Word Sabbath literally signifies no more than a Day of Rest,—yet it has always been very wisely and justly carried further.—I

Good and Virtuous have always paid that Respect and Attention to it, which doubtless was the immediate Intention and Will of God:—They have always considered it, not only as a Day of Rest to the Body, but a Day for more important Purposes,—the Salvation of their immortal Souls;—which, indeed, was nothing more than copying the very Language of Scripture, the Dictates of Heaven.—Observe the fifth Book of Moses thus instructs us:—"Keep the Sabbath Day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; six Days thou shalt Labor, and do all thy Work; but the seventh Day, is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."—If then, this is the Instruction of Heaven, how reasonable must it be, when we consider the many Obligations we are under to God?—He created us,—supports, and upholds us, and is constantly exhibiting fresh Instances of his Care and Protection over us, and therefore demands justly a return of Praise and Honor.—Nay, who of common Sense, Reason, and Human

nity, can look upon himself,—behold the many unmerited Blessings he often receives, and not inwardly worship, and adore the Majesty of God?—Reflecting on this, can we help acknowledging a supreme Governor of the Universe,—and do we not privately revere that great Head?—And if we thus in our private Moments find a Something necessary to be worshipped,—Reason calls aloud for a public Acknowledgment of the Feelings of the Heart.—If there was no such Custom as assembling to divine Worship, I'm afraid there would be little Religion, and less Humanity;—for we are too apt to be negligent in our private Instructions;—and if Religion was neglected,—the Fear of God would naturally lose its Dominion, and Christianity want a Name;—and in this Case, the enlightened Briton would be less humane than the untutored Indian;—for even in spite of Religion, and all its persuasive Motives to be good,—how many have we who are wanton in their Cruelty, and make even Wickedness their Pastime?—

How reasonable then, nay how necessary a Thing is it to have a fixed Time and Place to praise and worship God, to express our Obligations to him, to confess our Sins, and here sue for Pardon.—If God is to be solemnly worshipped,—to do it publicly is certainly the most Solemn, and doubtless the most Certain;—for if People were left to their own Liberty, every one to choose his own Time for the Performance of this Duty, I'm afraid many would neglect it entirely, or at best be languid, cold, and indifferent in their Devotions.—Men are too prone to Indolence, and too naturally attached to Gain, to be fond of that which brings Nothing in Hand,—and therefore, if the Sabbath was abolished, or had never existed—Religion, in this Case, would either be totally neglected, or at best be little attended to;—besides, if our temporal Concerns were suffered to interfere with our spiritual,—the latter must inevitably be omitted, or badly performed:—Consider, it is

possible for the Mind to prosecute two different Intentions at

once—"to serve God and Mammon;"—for while it was busied with the Affairs of this World, it would be entirely regardless of the Duties and Commands of God.—It appears, therefore, that a Sabbath is, on many Accounts, highly necessary for the true and proper Adoration of Almighty God:—Let us consider, therefore, further,—when, at what Time, or upon what Day it is most convenient for this Sabbath to be kept.—If it is well understood among the People, it is very indifferent; which Day is appointed for this great and necessary Duty, whether the First, the Fourth, the Sixth, or the Seventh.—If a Day is regularly observed, it matters little which.—'Tis true, God commanded the Seventh Day for this Purpose, and for a very substantial Reason,—because on this Day he rested from all his own Labor, in the Creation of the Universe, and all that dwells therein.—Perhaps, when he enjoined the Observation of this Day upon the Jews, he had an Eye, likewise, upon the Day he delivered them from their Troubles in E

—Indeed, Moses expressly says so in these Words—"Remember," says he, "that thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God, brought thee out thence, thro' a mighty Hand, and by a stretched out Arm;—therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee, to keep the Sabbath Day:"—But still, this by no Means argues, there is more Morality and Goodness in a Seventh, than a Sixth, or a First Day,—had this been the Case, there would have been no Need of a Command to enforce the Observation of it.—Besides, this Injunction extended itself to none but the Jews, and consequently bound no other Nation of a different Religion to attend to that one particular Day,—for the Performance of that Duty they owed to Almighty God,—but tho' there is no more Virtue belonging to that Day, than any other,—and tho' Christians are by no Means obliged particularly to observe it;—yet Reason strictly commands that they should keep one Day even holy to the Lord,—and if the Creation of the World;

—if the Deliverance of the Israelites were sufficient Motives for them to do so ;—What Injunctions have we ?—The Blessings and Benefits that we enjoy, the Ties and Obligations that bind us are infinitely more forcible and strong.—Let us seriously remember, that on the First Day of the Week, we Christians were happily delivered from Sin and Misery, and had immediately set before us a certain Prospect of future eternal Happiness.—The Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, was a clear Confirmation of all this ;—ought not we therefore to keep strictly that Day on which he rose and freed us from Sin ?—Ought not we to observe it with as much Solemnity and Thankfulness, as the Jews did that Day, on which they were delivered from temporal Bondage and Misery ?—It was a new Creation to us, and hence was very reasonably appointed for the Commemoration of our Redemption, and the Celebration of our bounden Duty to God.—As to the Lawfulness of this Change of the Day—it is clearly manifested

many Passages of St. Paul,—as well as in the Scripture History of the Apostles ;—we find that they not only observed, but always directed and recommended the Observation of the present Christian Sabbath,—and which has ever since, from their Example, been regularly, and I will venture to say, justly attended to.—Was this Change the worst, and the only Charge that should come against us, at the last great Day of Accounts,—how happy might we be?—How blameless in our Conduct,—and how peaceful in our Conscience!—Since then, it is evident, that if one Day in Seven is kept for holy Purposes, and that it is indifferent which,—it remains to consider how it ought to be kept.—Now, the Text informs and exhorts us, “ to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy; ”—and this must be done by separating it from the common Business and Entertainments of Life,—and by turning our Minds and Actions upon those Pursuits, which
rious and religious.—There should be a total Cessation

of all daily Labor,—save what Necessity absolutely requires, or what may be done with Decency and Propriety;—and as we are naturally sociable Creatures, no one should neglect, while Health permits, to attend the public Assembly of the Church;—Here he ought duly and regularly to repair to hear the Word of God, to mark, learn, and inwardly digest it:—Here he ought sincerely and devoutly to join in Prayer with the public Congregation,—and when upon his Knees, he should be very careful to fix his Mind firmly upon God,—lest it should play the Hypocrite, and swerve far from that Duty it seems and ought to perform.—Can he be better employed?—Tho' some Men thro' Ignorance, Heat, or Prejudice, have even dared to traduce our common Prayer;—yet I will venture to affirm, that none ever yet appeared equal in Goodness, or real intrinsic Value;—In themselves,—both as to the Matter and Form, they are good, excellent, and perfectly unexceptionable;—and as to the Mode of Preaching.

the Sanction it meets with from the most learned Men in the Kingdom, is certainly a sufficient Proof, that it is the best.—How wicked then, and how unwise is it, either to throw Contempt on such an Institution, or on frivolous Pretences to neglect attending divine Service:—And further, it is not sufficient that we regularly discharge our Duty in the Church, there still remains Something more to be done of equal Concern.—We must carefully prepare ourselves before we go, and afterwards meditate on what we have heard,—and particularly on those Observations which immediately touch our own Crimes and Failings,—This may cause a Remorse of Conscience, and hence a happy Reformation of our Manners, and an utter Detestation of our Sins.—And if we wish to amuse ourselves by Way of relaxing the Mind a little, which Sometimes becomes absolutely necessary, let it be in innocent Exercises, and not in those detestable Crimes of Intemperance and Debauchery, the horrid Practices of too many.—Practices that

pervert the Mind from the Service of God, to the Service of the Devil, and lead more directly than almost any Thing else to the utter Destruction both of Body and Soul:—Let us then, my beloved, as we have Opportunity and Ability, let us not only guard against these Transgressions ourselves, but endeavour, as much as possible, to prevent our Children, our Servants, and Dependants from the same Errors.—Nor let us deem it sufficient to restrain them from spending the Day ill; but to the best of our Power and Understanding, encourage and assist them to spend it well.—Thus we shall so employ the few Sabbaths, which we shall meet with on Earth, that at the Conclusion of them, we shall enter into that eternal Sabbath, that Rest which remaineth for the People of God alone in Heaven;—and which, that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, thro' Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. Amen.

(No. 2.)

Psalm 37th, Verse 4th.

"Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart."—

After so generous a Promise, who would not center all his Pleasure in God—here we are expressly told that if we delight in the Lord, he shall give us the Desires of our Hearts. A most gracious Offer—but I'm sorry to observe that Man is seldom wise enough to accept it—Man, who is naturally a thoughtful, inquisitive Being, and of whom a general Series of good and laudable Actions might reasonably be expected; particularly when we observe the brute Creation how they pursue a regular Course to that End, for which they were wisely designed.—How then must we direct Man to act consistent with himself?—The Method is plain and easy—Let him maintain a good Correspondence between his rational and sensitive Faculties—Let these go Hand in Hand—Let

them agree in one common Pursuit, and they will soon convince him, that what he delights in, (*viz.*) the Gratifications of a Brute, is very insignificant compar'd with the Delights of an Angel,—Tho' the one is present and may immediately strike our Senses, yet a short Reflection tells us, that it is at best but temporary, and must one Day have an End,—but the other, tho' seemingly at a Distance, yet it will come,—and being an eternal Concern, certainly claims our most serious Attention.—One cannot, therefore, do a greater Service to Mankind, than by directing them to a Way, that leads to present, as well as future Happiness, and this consists in an exact Observance of the Words of the Text; for to delight in the Lord comprehends all the Joys, that either Sense or Reason can desire, or Heaven or Earth bestow.—To delight in the Lord, is to look upon him as our chief Good, in whom all Perfection centers, and to endeavour by the Rules of Justice and Equity to please him in all our Actions—and while we

thus make him the principal Object of our Wishes, End and Aim, we need not doubt of a gracious Return for our Attention; He will give us perfect Tranquillity and Peace of Mind which we cannot otherwise obtain—it is but reasonable, if we wish for his Favours, that we endeavour to deserve them—Favours that are far beyond all our best Endeavours—and therefore cannot be expected where we place our Affections on so many different Objects, and parcel our Happiness into such a Variety of empty Joys and false Amusements here;—Different to this we ought to take a Pleasure in the Service of God—approach his Altars with suitable Reverence, Joy and Thanksgiving,—and hear his Word with serious Attention.—We should not go to Church merely mechanically, as a Clock regularly strikes at the Hour; but we should there hear the Word of God, ponder it in our Hearts, and thus let it become profitable to our Salvation,—to hear the Word and not regard it, is worse than not to hear it at all—it is

a Slight upon the Divinity of his Majesty, which his Justice can never dispense with; for "the wicked," thus offending, "shall not go unpunished."—If we delight in God and have a just and worthy Notion of him—we will often and seriously converse with him here in Meditation and Prayer—and long to enjoy him hereafter in Glory; thus, we would prove, that we had such a lively and affecting Sense of the Amiability of his Nature, as to wish for nothing in Comparison with him—and I doubt not this may soon be the Case with every worthy Hearer of the Word of God.—Man, as he is a Being, little lower than the Angels; as he is Heir of Heaven and a Kind of Representative of God himself upon Earth, is entitled to address his Creator with the Freedom and humble Confidence of a Son to a beloved and indulgent Father—for God in all his Revelations to Mankind has been pleased to take upon himself those endearing Appellations "Father, Redeemer, and Comforter,—and assures us, that

his Kindness for us under these Characters, far surpasses our highest Imaginations.—As a Parent his love is matchless;—As a Redeemer, he laid down his Life for his bitterest Enemies;—and as a Comforter, who among Men is equal to him?—To him, who is able and always willing to soothe our Sorrows and refresh our Souls—Nay, in a Word, if we look at his Mercies—our Conceptions will soon be full of his incomparable Goodness, and the Wonders he hath done for the Children of Men.—We shall behold him considering us his Friends, who are unworthy of being his Servants;—And shall we then be made capable of such an Honour, and not enjoy it?—Shall we banish ourselves as Aliens to such candid condescending Invitations, as we often receive from God himself?—"Draw near unto God and he will draw near unto you"—is the Language of Scripture, —and shall we still prefer useless Alliances with Men, to the exalted Privilege of knowing God, and of being known by

him?—But let me ask, can we not approach him with Confidence owing to the infinite Space betwixt us?—Are we afraid to accost him from the Instances of Severity recorded against Sinners in holy Writ?—True, if we are determined to continue in our Sins, we have just Reason to tremble at his Presence; for to such Men, he is beyond all Doubt a great and terrible Judge, and what is still more dreadful, —a consuming Fire.—Let me beg of you then as a sincere Advocate for your Wellbeing—let me beg of you often to approach the Throne of Mercy with humble Meditation and Prayer—and God, “who is always more ready to hear than we to pray,” will soon receive us into his good Graces, and give us amply, “more than either we desire or deserve” —If we only purify our Hearts—he will not fail to send his holy Spirit to comfort and dwell amongst us;—A better Companion than all the World can offer—It is our Duty, therefore, if we wish for this divine Friendship and holy

Intimacy, not to treat our Creator as a Creature; but to pay him the due Homage of a Creature to a Creator, which is to offer up our whole Souls to be possessed by him without a Rival:—If we scruple not to love and honor our earthly Prince, whose very best Favours are but temporary—how ought we to love the King of Kings, who not only can give us temporary Blessings; but exalt us to inconceivable, eternal Enjoyments?—If we duly consider he is the only Object that merits our Affections,—without him we can do Nothing of ourselves;—we are worthless; for without the Influence of his divine Spirit, all our best Endeavours would be vain and fall to the Ground,—Suppose a Man should sell all that he has and give to the Poor, without his Concurrence it would avail Nothing;—and hence he is grossly mistaken, who thinks to purchase Happiness by freely giving up all that he has to the Benefit of the Poor, when upon his Death=Bed he is well convinc'd he can hold it no longer—no—God will not thus

be bribed—Except our Hearts and Gifts go together our Benefactions are useless—nothing more than tempting infinite Perfection, and therefore miserably increasing our Damnation;—if our Happiness was to be bought with Money, the Poor would have a bad Chance to obtain it; but with Pleasure do I observe that thro' the Grace of God their Situations in this respect are equal—For “the Rich and Poor shall meet together in one Place, the Lord being the Maker of them all,”—and thus they become equally peculiar Objects of his Care and Attention,—This is clearly Evident, if we look at our Redeemer stooping from the Height of infinite Perfection, and expiring on the Cross for miserable Sinners—here was no respect of Persons—he died for all Mankind in general.—How then ought Mankind in general to delight in this incomparable, divine Humility?—We ought with the most submissive Obedience, to perform his Will in all the Acts of filial Love and Affection; not thro' an awful Dread of his

it is placed,—it exerts all our Faculties to please the beloved Object—Hence Love in Scripture is frequently styled the fulfilling of the Law,—and it certainly has a very just Right to the Title—It animates our Faith, encourages our Hope, and exalts our Charity to the highest Pitch of religious Perfection.—Let us then, my beloved, let us love and delight in the Lord with that Purity of Affection as is suitable to so divine a Majesty—let us look upon him, as he really is, as our “only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,”—and without whom we can enjoy no real Satisfaction here, nor Happiness hereafter.—It is an easy Matter to become Favourites with God, if we only use the Means;—Means that every one may use if he pleases—and certainly we have the greatest Reason to endeavour to please him, when we consider that he has promised to all such the Desires of their Hearts.—In a Word,—If we love God without Dissimulation,—
& him willingly—and approach him with due Reverence,

such as is due from a Creature to a Creator—Then shall we pass away this short Life with all possible Comfort, and enjoy hereafter an Eternity of such Transports of Bliss as are beyond all Expression and Imagination,—and in a perfect Union with him whom our Soul loves; and whom we shall still love more and more thro' all Eternity,—which that we may all do God grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. Amen.

(No. 3.) 10th Chapter St. Matthew, Verse 30th.

"The very Hairs of your Head are all numbered."

In this Chapter our Saviour is very candid and earnest in comforting his Disciples, and dispelling the gloomy Cloud of Melancholy that was apt to fall upon them. He asks them—"Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing? And one of these shall not fall to the Ground without your Father."—"Fear not therefore, ye are of much more Value than many Sparrows;"—even in such Degree, that "the very Hairs of your Head are all numbered."—Can any Thing be productive of greater Comfort?—Sure it will be Heaven itself to a pious Man to consider himself thus regarded by his great Creator, by him who governs Millions of Worlds—orders them as he thinks fit,—and commands them with a Nod.—Nay can human Language be expressive of more real Affection—does it not amaze us to think, that so great

a Personage, as the King of Kings, would even condescend to number his People, much more the very Hairs of their Heads?—If we reflect on this—How can we help exclaiming—"Lord, what is Man that thou hast such Respect unto him!"—But indeed we cannot be surpris'd when we consider the infinite Goodness of God, who takes this very plausible Method to exhibit his particular Regard to the Children of Men:—Thus he wishes to shew us that none of us are so inconsiderable as to escape his Notice, or be lost to his peculiar Care.—How then must a good Mind be wrapt up in Pleasure, ruminating on the impartial Dealings of Providence,—considering that though he is now visited with many Misfortunes, yet a Day will come, when perhaps he will take the Seat of the highest Monarch, and be entitled to the same Throne with his present King.—Oh! this Goodness of God, who thus humbleth himself,—stoops to our Advantage, and directeth "our Affairs for the Best,—But this, some may pretend to

dispute,—building their Arguments upon the general Chain of Misfortunes that attends them.—But let such consider that they ought rather to rejoice under their Sufferings, than give Way to Murmur and Complaint—for they may still be God's peculiar Favourites,—objects pitched upon to exercise the Wisdom of Providence,—to exhibit to the World patient Examples, and to shew Mankind what they are, and what they ought to be—how frail in every Respect, and how liable to be dissolved or tumbled from the Height of Prosperity to the lowest Depth of Misery and Want—and thus to shew how worthless this World is, and how little it claims our Attention.—While we live here, all we have to do in Regard to this World, is to do all the Good we can in our several Stations—Riches are given to the Rich to feed the Hungry—Ideas are given to the Wise to correct the Morals of Men—and Strength is often given to the Poor to be of Service to the Rich.—Let us then, as we have Opportunity, use these several Faculties to the best Ad

vantage.—Let no Man consider altogether his own Advantage;
—but let every Man, at the same Time, carefully consult
his Neighbour's Interest, and thus we fulfil the true End of
our Being—What Pleasure must it be—What Happiness
upon Earth, to wipe away the Tear of Misery, and ease the
Load of Care, that dulls the Countenance, and sometimes
distracts the very Brain of our Fellow-creatures?—Of those who
are no less than our own real Brethren, and claim our warmest
Friendship and strictest Attention.—But if this should not
excite such Generosity in us, certainly the Example of unerring
Wisdom we should not refuse to copy—Wisdom, that so careth
for us, that “even the very Hairs of our Heads are all
numbered.”—How then, my beloved, ought we, sprung from one
common Father, to love and assist one another?—I answer,
even as every one loveth himself—Would to God this was the Case
with Man—Thus we should form an agreeable Society, and, in-
deed, little inferior to the Angels in Heaven—Our Pleasure

would be in mutual Assistance—All Discord would cease, and the World would be one continued Scene of Concord and Harmony,—for according to St. Paul, “no Man would ever wish to go beyond or defraud his Brother in any Matter,” well knowing, “that the Lord is the Avenger of all such,” who do it.—Is not then a Life like this devoutly to be wished for?—And is not such a Life in our Power to obtain? And do not we well know that in such a Life as this alone, we can assure ourselves of real Happiness?—Granted—Why then will we thus, as too often we do, wilfully fly the Road that leads to it?—Why do we knowingly grasp at vain Pleasures, mere empty Bubbles? Nay, why are we foolishly pleased with the mere Shadow of Things?—Things that are transient,—as fleeting as the Wind,—give Pleasure for a Time, but soon pall upon the Sense, and Enjoyment is lost—They soon prove themselves too insignificant to afford any Thing real, or even to continue that Felicity they once seemed to give.—It is therefore our most

bounden Duty to copy the Dictates of our Saviour, and imitate, as much as possible, the Goodness of God.—The Lord has given us Counsel, and we should bless him for it.—We should set him always before us; and while he is at our right Hand we shall never be unhappy,—for Solomon comfortably assures us, that “in the Presence of God is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand Pleasures for evermore.”—A Situation that a Pagan would envy, and the most abandoned wish for; and shall we, as Rebels to ourselves, refuse to accept the Favour of God?—Shall we rejoice rather in Darkness, and refuse to make Use of the Lamp, when it is even placed in our Hands?—This is treating ourselves as open Enemies to ourselves, which we must one Day acknowledge with Shame and Remorse—I hope then, since the Goodness of God has, out of pure Compassion and Pity to us his Creatures, placed a Lanthorn to our Feet.—I hope we will catch the Opportunity and make the best ^{use} of it.—Look at yourselves, and behold in what Relation

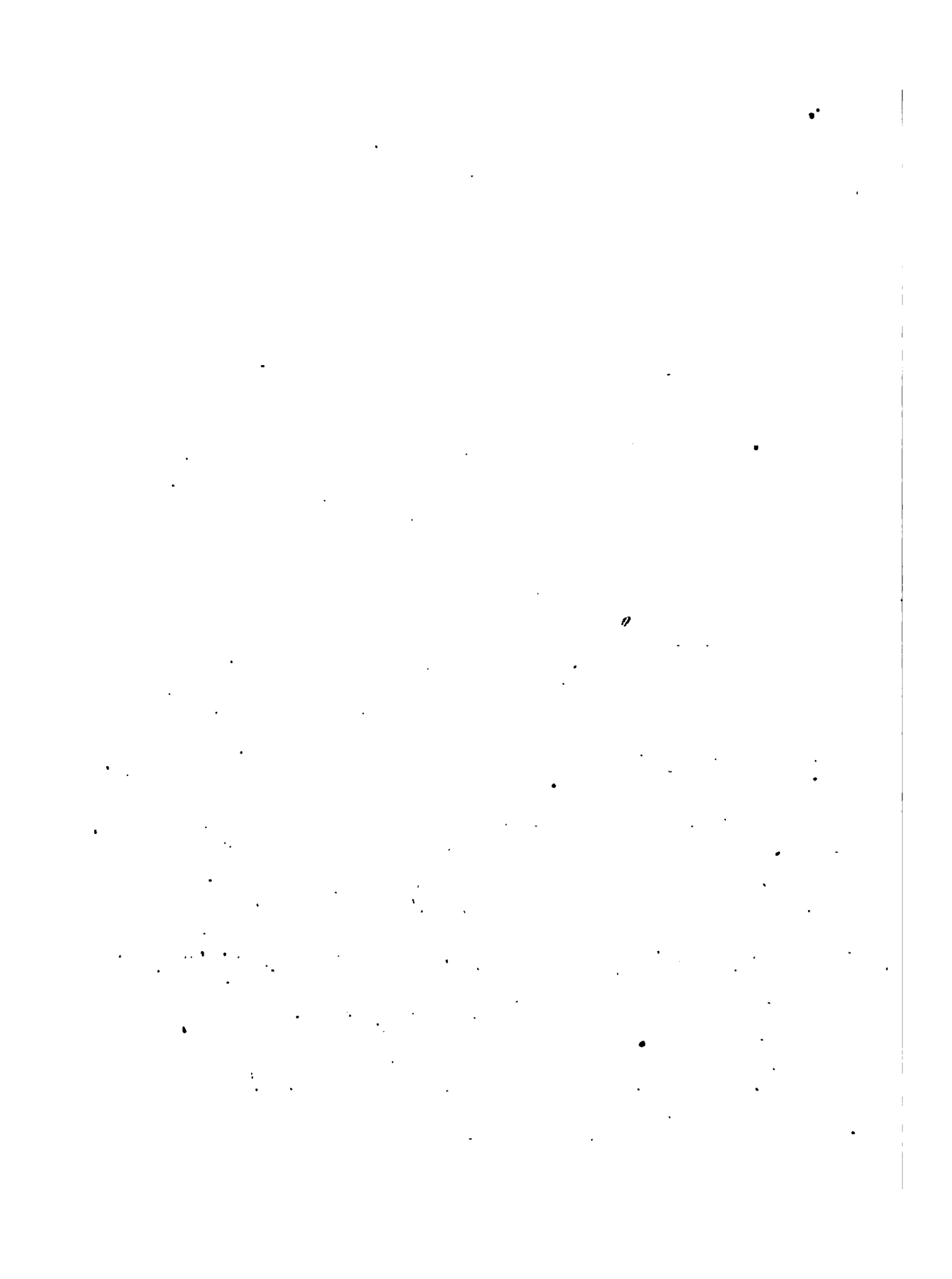
you stand with God—see yourselves within the Verge of his Providence, and peculiar Objects of his Care—See him dispose of every Thing to the best Advantage,—behold him correct our Insolence, and reward our Virtues,—and observe his Mercy, even in Severity, and his Readiness to forgive our Iniquities ; —Yes, “ the Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord—he is holy in all his Ways, and righteous in all his Doings ; and his tender Mercies are over all his Works : ” —Can we then reflect on this, and not admire the incomparable Goodness of God?—’Tis impossible—a serious Thought on this, would doubtless render the cruel, merciful,—and the abandoned, virtuous ;—for, here we must be lost in Admiration,—lost to all Manner of Words,—except the divine Breathings of—“ Oh! blessed be God for his inimitable Love to Mankind !—Oh! for ever adored be his holy Name for thus regarding us ungrateful Mortals, who claim no right to such condescending Humility, and as little Merit to his abundant Attention.” —And further, this, his

condescending Humility and abundant Attention,—his Mercy
—his Love to Mankind was conspicuously displayed in our
Saviour,—by whom we are from Time to Time supplied with
such a Measure of Grace and Influence of his divine Spirit, as
he sees is needful or proper for our Condition.—Shall a Man
then, who sees, feels, and owns all this, shall he dare to continue
in his Sins?—Does he believe that Jesus was raised from the
Dead, and yet, regardless, leads a wicked Life?—I'm
afraid too many do—But let me ask—What Apology has
he, who does so?—Will he urge that his Temptations are too
strong for him, that he wants Grace and Strength to overcome
them?—And that the Corruptions of his Nature are such,
that he must be a Slave to them, whether he will or no?—If
such are his Arguments, he must have forgot the Resurrection
of Christ,—by whom he has a Power superior to that of corrupt
Nature, and who never refuses to pour his Grace upon every
Soul that asks it,—It follows, therefore, that he who sins,

(knowing these Circumstances) must sin wilfully:—To him then, who desires to be good, this must be a mighty Comfort and pleasing Encouragement—An Encouragement in the highest Degree, to think that we are indulged to approach the Throne of Grace,—there to open our Wants,—and be well assured of such Relief as is most convenient for us.—Christ is risen from the Dead—he loved us, and loves us still—is at the right Hand of God, and there is able and willing to grant us every reasonable Desire, compatible with his Divinity,—nay it is a Pleasure to him to make Intercession for us.—Let us then fly to him for succour—let us beg a Portion of that Grace he hath purchased for us—Be assured he will hear our sincere Prayers, and grant us such Power as to enable us to vanquish and triumph over every Evil that opposes us—He will teach us to bear every Misfortune with Patience, and convince us that the Dispensations of God, though not always prosperous, are nevertheless the Effects of Kindness,—that the

are absolutely meant for our Good, and if we use them, as we ought, they will turn to our Benefit.—The Calamities, the Disappointments, that are incident to Man, if properly understood, are all so many Instances of his Care and Concern for our Happiness—Should we be allowed to go on uninterrupted in our Affairs, we would soon set too great an Esteem upon this World, to have any Relish for that which is to come; and hence we should be apt to forget our Duty to God, and thus might heedlessly barter eternal Bliss, for the few fleeting Pleasures of a transient World—The very Nature of God is to do all Good, at all Times, to all his Creatures—But this he cannot do to every one the same Way—Like a tender, wise and loving Parent,—he chastises those, who stand in Need of it, and indulges those, who have Prudence to bear it;—Let us then, my beloved,—let us carefully consider all this—let us not forget ourselves in our Enjoyments here,—But let us in every Circumstance remember that there is a

Lord in Heaven that seeth all our Works, and whom it is our greatest Interest to please—for know, his Care over us is much more than that of the tenderest Parent to his Son, and therefore it would be cruel in us to abuse his Goodness;—remember, he once condescended to die for our Safety, and, be assured, his surpassing Kindness is still so anxious for our Welfare,—so particular in its Regard, that he numbereth the very Hairs of our Heads,—and continues to attend us in every Step we take.—Since then, his Respect is so extensive, and his Affection so sincere,—let us firmly resolve from this Moment, to return it, as much as possible;—and let us in every Situation of Life,—Adversity or Prosperity,—let us be content and composed, and even kiss the Rod of Correction; for though “the Chastisements of God are not joyous but grievous, yet, according to the Apostle, they are intended for the bringing forth the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness in all them that are exercised thereby.” Now to God the Father, &c. Amen



X

(No. 4.)

Psalm 145th, Verse 20th.

"The Lord preserveth all them that love him; but scattereth abroad the Ungodly."

This is a Truth we need not doubt—for sufficient Examples have been repeatedly exhibited to the World to justify it—I shall beg Leave to take Notice of that of the excellent Author of the Text—His Love of the Lord, at one Time, was most ardent and affectionate,—at another, Self-indulgence seems to have been his darling Delight—during which Period he had many Difficulties to encounter, and suffered many disagreeable Turns of Fortune—but when his Eyes were opened—when he saw that God was the only Shield under which he could rest secure,—and when he practised what he knew—The Effects were soon obvious—he soon became a peculiar Favourite of God,—and was eminently styled, "the Man after God's own Heart;" and certainly no Man had a better

Right to the Title.—In his latter Devotions he seems to have been Something more than Man,—for Nothing can go beyond the Zeal of his Petitions,—here was Something more than a mere mechanical Lip-Service, his Heart is the Sacrifice he offers.—Look into his divine Book, and you will find in every Page of it his passionate Love for God,—says he, “as the Heart panteth after the refreshing Streams of the Water Brooks,—so longs my Soul for thee, O God.”—And similar Passages are the sole Composition of his whole Book.—No Wonder then, that such pious Efforts,—and such inimitable Expressions of Hope, Trust, and Delight in God, was able to cover a Multitude of Sins,—and render the hardest Yoke easy, and the heaviest Burden light,—God, to our Comfort, is a Being of infinite Mercy, and will accept, however once depraved, our sincere Sacrifices, if offered up through a pure Love of his Majesty,—a filial Affection,—and a willing and cheerful Obedience to the Duties of his Service.—Give

me Leave then in the Sequel of my Discourse to shew the peculiar Advantages of loving God sincerely, as to its present Comforts and future Felicity,—and at the same Time to shew to you how he will scatter abroad the Ungodly.—The Goodness of God there has created Man with very exalted Ideas,—enabled him to tower above this common World, to seek for more refined Happiness than he meets with here,—which is a clear Demonstration, that he was designed for some higher Good than this World can possibly give him:—For the Understanding and the Will being of so refined and spiritual a Nature, that Nothing but what is rational,—Nothing but what is divine can be an adequate Pleasure to them.—The Entertainments of Sense are too gross, and this World too narrow for our unlimited Desires to range in; and therefore we seek for Something unseen to quench our unbounded Wishes after Knowledge and Felicity, which can be Nothing less than the Enjoyment of an all-sufficient supreme Good.—Y

the most enlarged Thoughts are swallowed up, reflecting upon the Glories of Heaven, and the Wonders and Delights of a blessed Eternity.—Therefore we must be endow'd with immortal Spirits, and certainly Heaven is the most proper Place for immortal Spirits to move in:—Let your Understandings contemplate the infinite Knowledge of God:—Let our Wills embrace him as our sovereign Good; and they will exert themselves with Pleasure, upon their proper Objects, and truly answer the End of their Creation.—They pay Omnipotence his due Respect,—which can never be too much admired.—Here we can arrive at no End,—the more we admire, the more will we still admire,—for after we have spent even Ages in this Employment, we shall still be as far removed from a perfect Knowledge of him as ever.—It would be a melancholy Reflection, that Man is not sufficient for his own Happiness; but to his Comfort there is a Being above him and able to recourse to—else this World would be a dreary uncomfortable

Place, and Life itself an intolerable Oppression:—But when we are assured that the Favour of God will supply all Defects of Power in us; and when we desire to do Nothing, but what is agreeable to him—then we shall in a Manner partake of the divine Nature, and this Earth, amidst all its Troubles, will prove to us a Kind of Heaven,—and doubtless all such, who thus conduct themselves, God will not fail to preserve:—But if we follow human Pleasures—as Solomon tells us, where we expect to meet with Satisfaction and Comfort, we shall find Nothing but “Vanity and Vexation of Spirit;”—for God of his infinite Justice scattereth abroad all such.—Wealth, Honour, and sensual Pleasure, are the great Idols of the World,—each of which has innumerable Votaries, who think the Attainment of one darling Delight deserves the utmost Care of their whole Lives:—But, let me ask,—were not all these Ingredients enjoyed in their fullest Perfection by Solomon? And was not he miserably mistaken in their Produ-

—How vain then are our Hopes, how empty our Expectations, when confined within the narrow Limits and Fruition of one of these imaginary Pleasures? for instead of yielding any solid Joy—they only augment our Trouble and Sorrow:—The Pursuit wearies us, and the Enjoyment always disappoints us.—Hence, Godliness is the only Ground and Foundation of true Happiness.—If any Pleasure in Life can satisfy a rational Being,—it must be in the Discovery and Improvement of Arts and Sciences, and from a close Inspection into the Secrets of Nature.—These are Diversions most refined, and best fitted for our intellectual Faculties.—Yet even in these, we are told by one of great Experience, that “in much Wisdom there is much Grief, and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow;” we must therefore look out for some other Pleasure more worthy our Nature, that can sufficiently reward our Pains.—Survey then both Heaven & Earth for real Felicity, and I doubt not you will address

yourself to God himself as your sovereign Good; and exclaim with the Psalmist, "whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth, I desire besides thee."—Let our Affections therefore be placed on God alone; it is he that can answer all our Hopes,—provide for all our Wants, and fill up our immense Capacities of Enjoyment:—And when our Love for God is the Principle of all our Actions, it gives those Amusements and Diversions, which are insipid in themselves, a grateful Relish and Agreeableness.—Then we may enjoy the innocent Pleasures of Sense with Safety and Advantage; which will be so far from interrupting our Devotion, or interfering with the Offices of Religion, that they will rather dispose and enable us to discharge them to a better Purpose,—For our Natures in this imperfect State, cannot bear a long Attention on the same Objects, be they never so entertaining—they would inevitably sink under the Weight, and become miserable with the Enjoyment.—It is not so much the Marvelous, a

the Novelty of any Thing that pleases us, and awakens the Attention most; and therefore the Concerns of another World are never so well conducted, as when Religion and innocent Avocations, like Day and Night, succeed each other.—A true Lover of God runs no Risque from the Contagion of Vice, and the Examples of the wicked—they don't in the least effect him, unless he is something disposed to find such in a rational World, and it may cost him some Pains to convert or recover their lost State; as to his own Affections, they are so taken up with the best and most amiable of all Objects, that there is no Room in his Heart for any other Passion; he considers no Pleasure equal to Almighty Favour;—no Affliction like that which robs him of it.—The Light of God's Countenance shall be to his Heart like Marrow and Fatness;—but Tears shall feed him Day and Night, when Men shall say unto him—"where is now thy God?"—What Comforts then shall attend the Just who love God, and what

Sorrows shall ever haunt him who departeth from him,—for without the Influence of God's reviving Grace 'tis impossible to be ever happy,—and with it, 'tis impossible to be miserable,—equally as impossible, as if we could live, move, and have our Being without his Providence.—To prove which, let me ask, do we find any Satisfaction comparable in Life to that which springs from Devotion?—I think you answer no,—particularly on Consideration—that the more we think and reflect on this Employment, the more it grows and improves,—whereas all other Pleasures die in the Enjoyment,—which evidently proves, that it must be a Work of infinite and incomparable Worth.—If to be purged from all our Sins, and to be freed from all our Fears is a Consolation, then all this and much more, the Practice of a fervent and constant Devotion brings,—beyond the Reach of Time and Power of Change,—for Nothing can interrupt our Communication with Heaven; our Prayers even from the uttermost Confines of

the Earth shall reach thither,—for God has promised, that “ if we ask we shall receive, and if we knock the Gates of Heaven itself shall open; ”—An exact Conformity to the divine Laws will make the Conscience calm and serene, and settle our Minds in perfect Ease and Tranquility:—And when we are advanced to such a Perfection of Grace, as to love God without a Rival, we shall find that the most exquisite Entertainments of the World will appear very dull and insipid,—all Sorrows will be removed, and even Death itself (the most Dreadful of all human Evils) shall be considered as only an Introduction to a Life immortal,—to Honors unspeakable,—and Joys full of Glory.—Whereas the wicked Man, who denies Heaven, spurns at the Throne of God,—abuses his holy Name, and lives in a daring Contempt of his Laws,—shall be thrown headlong from his Presence, and utterly denied the Intermediation of his gracious Son; for “ he scattereth abroad
-“ the Ungodly.”—Let us then, my beloved, not only with our

Lips, but with our Lives, Hearts, and Souls love him, who hath created a World to serve us here, and hath provided a Heaven to glorify us hereafter,—and who, to encourage the Performance of this our great Duty, hath liberally promised more Rewards, than we possibly could either desire or deserve,—for, in a Word, if you thus love God, as your greatest Good,—you shall be preserved as his peculiar Favourites, and introduced into eternal Bliss,—when others that make themselves their Gods, shall fall inevitably into everlasting Misery.—That this Consideration may sink deeply in your Hearts, and have its proper Effect, is my humble and sincere Prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. &c. Amen.

x

(No. 5.)

18th Chapter Ezekiel, Verse 28th.

" Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his Transgressions, which he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

Would Men only consider the grand Business of Life,—would they view themselves impartially and as they really are,—Nothing but Sojourners here,—sent to act upon the Stage of Life, in a State of Probation and Trial,—and which will redound at last to an endless Happiness or Misery.—Were they to consider thus within themselves, they would not waste so many Days, Months, and Years, in the prevailing Vices of the Age;—nay many of the most darling Iniquities would be flighted, and the Transgressions we had been so much addicted to, and to which we had been such great Slaves, would inevitably give way to Justice, Piety and Integrity.—Malice, that Tree of Contention, would droop

its Head,—wither and decay,—and Friendship would naturally raise its long declining Head, bud, and blossom:—To consider our Ways therefore must be the great Law of human Nature,—The first Principle of Wisdom,—the Eye of a good Conduct, and the Spring of Resolution, without which there can be no Steadiness or Activity in the Prosecution of the Duties of Life, which can conduct us with Safety through the difficult, and many intricate Stages of it,—and the Want of Steadiness will betray us into many Irregularities, and bring upon us unawares, Shame, Remorse, and perhaps Ruin.—What Method then can we possibly seize upon preferable, and that will tend more to our Benefit here, and Happiness hereafter;—than the Practice of just and serious Observations upon our own and other Men's Conduct.—Practices, I will venture to affirm, of the greatest Use and Improvement to every one, who will duly attend to them.—

And himself sets us the Example,—for after he had finished the

Creation, he took a View of all his Works, and " behold they were very good: "—We then in like Manner should daily and weekly survey ourselves, and reflect on all our Actions,—though we cannot do it, as God did, with Pleasure and Satisfaction;—Nay, though on the Contrary the Prospect is terrifying and dismaying,—yet by a constant Survey, we will doubtless improve in our Warfare, and through the Grace of God become " mighty," as St. Paul has it, " to the pulling down of strong Holds," i. e. though our Transgressions may have gained ever so advantageous a Post, or are ever so firmly rooted, thus we may easily conquer or eradicate them;—hence it is, that this Duty of considering and thinking on our Ways, is so frequently recommended by the Precept, and urged by the Examples of holy Men in Scripture,—Jeremiah, in his Lamentations for Jerusalem's Misery, thus fervently exclaims, " Let us search and try our Ways and turn again unto the Lord." Holy David prescribes also the same Rule, and withal adds

how and where to use it,—says he, “Commune with your own Hearts, in your Chamber, and be still.”—This is what he himself strictly observed to do, for says he, in another Place, “In the Night I commune with my own Heart, and in my Spirit make a diligent Search.”—Let this Lesson then, which the wise Heathens strictly followed, be our Example:—It is well worthy a Christian, though it first fell from a Heathen’s Pen, and deserves our strictest Imitation.—Let us before we betake ourselves every Evening to rest, let us review and examine all the Passages of the Day,—for thus, we may have the Comfort of what we have done aright, and learn to redress what we have done amiss,—By this Means the Rocks we fall upon to Day, would be as Marks to direct our Course in another,—and hence, we would experimentally find that such a Conduct would greatly contribute to advance our Reformation and preserve our Innocency.—To neglect this great Duty of considering our Ways,—

must be to neglect our Souls, and consequently bring the Enemy near, who will watch each favourable Opportunity, and inevitably, if we have not more than common Fortune, destroy all our precious Hopes of Futurity;—for such a Neglect must naturally breed Ignorance, and that the absurdest in the World,—Ignorance of ourselves.—Though a Man knows not one Point in Divinity.—Though he cannot find out the natural Course and Tendency of Things;—The Motions of the planetary System, nor tell the Histories of the Times and Persons long before.—Yet this Ignorance can disparage none; but those, who pretend to Learning and Knowledge;—but to be a Stranger at Home,—to stray out of ourselves, and forget to return,—to carry a rational Soul in our Bosoms, and not to enquire into its Operations, is gross Stupidity that the darkest Mind should be ashamed of.—God hath liberally bestowed upon Man, that noble Faculty of Reason, that it might be a Lanthorn to his Feet, and

Guide to his Eyes; that it might enable him to distinguish between Good and Evil,—and direct his Actions to the attaining the one, and avoiding the other,—and shall he neglect this great Privilege he enjoys above the Brute Creation, which tread on in one even Line, without the least Regard to past or future Events?—Shall HE neglect it,—who can look forward and backward,—compare his past and present Conduct with the proper Rule of his Actions, and consider the Tendency and Consequences of them?—It is but just with God that he expects it from us,—complain when we make no Use of it,—and punish our daring Negligence.—The gross Absurdity of worshipping Idols is totally imputed to this Cause,—this Want of a due Consideration and Self-Examination:—As the Lord himself saith to Jacob and Israel, "Ye are my Witnesses,—Is there any God besides me?—Yea there is no God, I know not any. They that make a graven Image, all of them Vanity, they are their own Witnesses; they

see not nor know, that they shall be ashamed,—they have not considered in their Hearts to say—what, shall I fall down to the Stock of a Tree? nor have they Understanding to enquire if there is not a Lye in their right Hand?"—Now such Ignorance as this is very dangerous on many Accounts.

—First, in Regard to the many Temptations we are continually exposed to,—which require us to search, try, and well consider our Ways, that we may be proof against any sudden Surprizal.—Do the very best we can, being weak, frail Creatures, we have innumerable Defects and Failings,—and especially where old Habits of Sin are to be conquered.—Could we but discern it, we are continually surrounded with Snares.—Without are Fightings,—within are Fears,—and as Seneca justly observes, "we stand but weakly, even where we have the surest Footing."—Consider every Condition of our Lives, lies open to the Assaults of our Adversary;—he was ever the Serpent for Malice and Enmity,—and was found too hard for Man.

in his Perfection,—and consequently how much more so must he be now in his maimed and fallen State?—Then to prevent all these encircling Dangers, requires the Assistance of Grace,—the Help of Wisdom, and the Act of Vigilance,—and he, who entirely wants these,—how can he hope to escape?—Where prudent Men are often caught,—what shall become of rash and heedless Adventurers?—What was it the Israelites said of Jehu? —“Kings could not stand before him, how then shall we stand?”—And our Situation is directly similar,—for if the chiefs of God's Servants have shamefully fallen for want of due Circumspection:—Then must we inevitably fall, if we will not diligently consider our own Ways, watch carefully our Steps, that through divine Grace, we may better learn those of God.—Wounds for want of proper cleansing will ulcerate and grow incurable, and when a secret Corruption hath been long breeding in the Bosom of a Sinner, like a Magazine of Powder, it takes Fire at the first Temptation, and breaks

out into Impieties, 'tis next to an Impossibility, ever to get right.—And further, what Dread and Terror must fill the Breast of him, who hath many Accounts still unbalanced on his Hands, when new and old are to be reckoned for at once,—when so many thousand thousandth Debts are to be cleared, of which there is not the least Sum discharged.—Can Man think of this without Alarm?—Can he reflect on it without Fear?—No,—if he reflects, he must see the Necessity of the frequent Exercise of considering his Ways, and he cannot but deplore a shameful Neglect therein.—Let us therefore employ a little of our leisure Hours, for sufficient Leisure we have, in questioning with our Hearts, what we have been, and what we are,—and then consider—if our Course of Life does God honor?—If our Country, our Friends, or our own Souls are the least benefitted by it?—If we improve in Grace? If our Faith,—our Charity,—our Obedience increase?—And above all let us ask—as this Life is precarious—what Provision he

we made for a better?—We have often sinned, but what Repent-
tion have we made? Can we hope for God's Grace and Par-
don?—If we should die To-morrow, nay the next Moment,
Where is our Hope? Where is our Redeemer? and when we
stand in Judgment, who will be our Advocate?—Would we
only question ourselves in this Manner, we would then be apt
to discover our Errors, and might have a fair Opportunity to
amend them:—But when God looks down from Heaven, and
discerns our Lives and Conversations, miserably drawn aside
after the Love of the World,—may he not justly complain with
us, as he did with Israel.—“ I hearkened and heard but
they spake not aright, no Man repented him of his Wickedness,
saying, what have I done?”—and justly might he thus com-
plain; for every Man turned to his Ways, without dread or
fear,—without the least Consideration, as a Horse rusheth to
Battle.—The great Artifice of our spiritual Enemy is al-
ways to hide us from ourselves,—to amuse our Passions with

a continual Succession of Pleasure, and to engage us in the Pursuit of some delusive Phantom of temporal Happiness:— But can all his Afsiduity ever lull the Conscience, even of the most Profligate and Careless to Supineness:—No, the Conscience is always awake, and will find some Opportunity to demand our calm and serious Attention.—It will remind us that we are accountable to a Being, whose Omniscience cannot be deceived; to whom our most secret Actions are open,—whose Justice we cannot elude,—whose Power we cannot resist,—who has engaged our Obedience by Wonders of Love,—and has denounced a Sentence of irreverfable Misery on the ungrateful Sinner.—Let us not therefore defer the Consideration of our Ways, lest we defer our Repentance,—and forget to turn from our Transgressions.—It is not hard to examine our Conduct by the Laws of God; and certainly it is worthy our Time, when we consider what Pleasure must flow from the Approbation of good and laudable Actions,—but by all Means,

this Duty be strictly recommended to the daring Sinner: If it is neglected, he is undone for ever; he is led thoughtlessly on from one Stage of Error to another, till he is too far gone to make a Retreat, till the dreadful Scene of Vengeance opens upon him,—he sees Nothing behind him but unpardoned Guilt, and Nothing before but Misery and Despair.—Let us then, without delay, resolve to practise a Duty, which is of such absolute Necessity and high Importance.—Let us so consider and investigate our Hearts, that we may not fail to turn from such Transgressions as we have from Time to Time committed.—For by such a Conduct, God himself assures us, that we shall ever live, and never die.—Now to God the Father, &c. &c. Amen.

"The King spake and said,—Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the House of the Kingdom, by the Might of my Power, and for the Honor of my Majesty?"

Behold what presumptuous Boasting is here!—Here the great King Nebuchadnezzar seems not only to tower above his Fellow-Creatures:—but to take upon him the Greatness of a God:—but, observe how frail is Man—"While the Word was yet in the King's Mouth, there fell a Voice from Heaven," saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the Kingdom is departed from thee;—and they shall drive thee from Men, and thy Dwelling shall be with the Beasts of the Field; they shall make thee to eat Grass as Oxen, and seven Times shall pass over thee, till thou knowest that the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it

to whomsoever he will;"—and no sooner was this said, than it was fulfilled upon him,—which evidently shews us the frailty of Man, and how vain and insignificant is his Power;—if Man has Strength 'tis God that gave it,—if Man has Wisdom it is the Merit of God,—and if he has Honor he is indebted to God,—and God, who bestows these Endowments upon mortal Beings, can in a Moment deprive him of them.—Why then should Man glory in any Possession, and behold himself with an Eye of Self-Conceit, and affect that Superiority above his Fellows he by no Means justly claims, or is in the least intitled to?—Why does he still choose to wade in the Mist of Error, rather than submit to ask himself those material Questions, which conduct his Steps under the Light of Reason and Sunshine of Justice?—For, if a Man will only ask himself, whether he should, or should not do many inconsiderate Things he does,—I'm verily persuaded he would never err, further than by committing those Sins of Ignorance

'tis impossible to avoid.—For Instance,—should a Man oppressed with Poverty,—emaciated with Disease,—and daily visited with almost insupportable Misfortunes, even to such Degree that he is upon the Brink of Self-Destruction.—Yet, would he, even in these Circumstances, ask himself whether 'tis right,—I'm certain he would drop the fatal Instrument prepared to end his Existence,—for thus, he would soon find that he was then warring against that Being; who governs all,—can overthrow all,—and who has prepared an unalterable Portion for his rebellious Subjects with the damned.—Let us consider then what is the first and leading Motive to this End?—It is evident from the Text,—Pride is that flattering deceitful Guide that leads to Destruction,—It was this that brought Nebuchadnezzar down,—it is this that ruins Millions,—and what is it but this that causes such Confusion at the Head of all our Affairs.—It is surely this that wrests the Helm out of the Hand best qualified to govern it, and thus risks the Vessel.

guided thereby, of a dangerous and irrecoverable Shipwreck.—

"Let not the wise Man therefore," according to Jeremiah, "glory in his Wisdom, nor let the mighty Man glory in his Might; neither let the rich Man glory in his Riches;—but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that God Almighty is that Sovereign he wishes chiefly to please."—This is the Way for Man to conduct himself, if he values a Life of quietness here, and an Inheritance of immortal Glory hereafter;—for what signifies all the Possessions of the World, if we make Flesh our Arm, and God our Enemy;—if we possess Riches, they should not be allowed to tempt us to Pride and Insolence;—they should not so take Possession of our Senses, as to render us disagreeable to Man, and odious to God.—If our Wealth increases, we should not increase in Haughtiness, but in Humility and Meekness;—in Charity and brotherly Affection:—not like that haughty Prince of Tyrus, who having amassed immense Treasures of Gold and Silver, lifted

up his Heart, considering himself as a God;—nay, in such a Manner, as he neither regarded Man, nor depended upon Providence.—What though we have Goods laid up for many Years; yet this does not bid us sing a Requiem to our Souls, or entitle us to indulge every Appetite and Passion,—not considering from whom we have received them, nor how soon we may be stripped of them.—Neither, if we are Men of Power, are we from hence entitled to Arrogance or Insolence,—we are not to deem ourselves totally secure under our imaginary Strength, and despise the God of our Salvation.—This Temper was the Overthrow of that insulting Champion of the Philistines, Goliath, who, relying on his mighty Bulk and Vigour, dared even to defy the Armies of the living God;—nor are we like wicked Ahab and Jezebel, thus to use our Authority, as to rob the Labourer of his Vineyard, and proceed to kill and take Possession,—no,—if we have Power, we must be merciful, if we expect to have Mercy,—and we must deal our Benefits

as we wish to partake of the Blessings of the living God.
—Let us then, like truly wise Men, let us eradicate that
baneful Weed from our Breasts, that poisons where it runs,—
Let rational Wisdom guide us, and we shall soon discover that
Man's Strength bears no Proportion to his Weakness,—
neither does his Knowledge bear any Proportion to his Ignorance,—and if we survey the World, we will see no one so
despicable as a conceited Fool.—Wisdom, where it is properly
used, is certainly the greatest Ornament of Man;—
and where it is abused, it is equally as contemptible;—and
this is too often the Case,—a Man of Wisdom is too apt to hear
and receive Compliments, through which Inlet, Pride generally
creeps in,—and when once a Man suffers his Wisdom to take
Pride by the Hand, 'tis ten to one he dies a Martyr to
Frenzy and Madness.—And when we consider,—why should
Wisdom make us Haughty?—We have Nothing, of ourselves,
'ast of;—God, who bestowed it, can take it away through

many Channels we are not aware of.—One Fit of a Fever may shatter the highest Pitch of Understanding, and convert us to Fools or Idiots.—A Blow upon the Head may disorder the strongest and best poised Brain, and confound the clearest Understanding.—What is there then in Wisdom to make us insolent? what is there to make us view ourselves with an Eye of Self-Conceit? —Nothing,—it is the Gift of God, for which we should return him our warmest Thanks,—and earnestly pray for its Continuance in such-wise, that he might send his Grace along with it, so to enable us to become useful Members to present and future Ages.—If then there is Nothing in Wisdom to make us Haughty, how little is Power or Authority entitled to make us so; for, as the wise Man observes, "Wisdom very far exceedeth Strength."—Now if our Power is considered as to military Sway, we have Nothing to boast of; for the Race is not always to the Swift, neither the Battle to the Strong.—Let our Preparations be never so great and cautious against the Day of Battl

Victory is only of the Lord.—David tells us, that no King can be saved by the Multitude of an Host, neither is any mighty Man delivered by much Strength;—for “by the Interposition of God an Hundred shall chase a Thousand, and one Thousand shall put ten Thousand to flight;”—the greatest Armies therefore cannot always assure themselves of Conquest.—Vain then it is to trust in our Power or Might, since, without God, Nothing is strong, Nothing is powerful, Nothing is able to prevail;—True, where Power is conjoined with Wisdom and Virtue, it is amiable in a Man—and where there is such a Character, it is happy for the People that are under such Authority; for here the Naked are cloathed, the Hungry are fed, and Mankind in general enjoy the Privilege of a good Example—but, I’m sorry to observe, that in the common Run of Mankind, for one that is wise and good, we find ten of a contrary Disposition—Give a private Man Power, one, who has hitherto conducted himself with Respect, and the utmost Decorum, and ’tis not to be

wondered, according to the Depravity of the Age, if he turns cruel and abandoned.—Give a Man the Power of doing what he pleases with Impunity, and you extinguish his Fear, and consequently overturn in him one of the strongest Pillars of Morality.—This we find confirmed by Matter of Fact—How many hopeful Heirs Apparent to grand Empires, when in the Possession of them, have become such Monsters of Lust and Cruelty, as are a Reproach to human Nature.—Would to God Men in Power would endeavour, in their Government, to resemble that of Heaven, as much as possible—Would they copy, as far as their Nature will allow, the Goodness and Justice of God,—we would then have no despotic Sway,—no Barbarity among us—for where Goodness and Justice are blended with Power, we may rest very Happy, without the least Apprehension of bad Consequences, for such a Government cannot err;—for he, who governs under these Directions, will soon see the Folly of Pride and Haughtiness, and hence his Rule will be

formed of sound Reason, Wisdom and Lenity.—If then Fortune has made us Princes—if Fortune has made us Masters of any Degree or Denomination; by all Means, let this small Degree of Preeminence sit easy upon us; for Nothing so much discovers the Vanity and Folly of Man, as the boasting of, or a barbarous Manner of shewing what we are, or what we have been;—If we consider, this is not only acting diametrically opposite to the Rules of Religion, but it is a very dangerous Pride; for Isaiah tells us, that “the Lord of Hosts shall lop the Bough of Terror, and the high Ones of Stature shall be hewn down, and the Haughty shall be humbled.”—If then we wish to be properly exalted, let us first humble ourselves, for “he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;”—Let us from hence learn to know that Man is but Man, frail and weak of himself and not to be depended upon where a precious Soul is concerned;—if we boast in any Thing—Let it be in the Knowledge of God, and of his

Son Jesus Christ.—This is the Knowledge, which he that seeketh is wise, he that getteth is rich, and he that keepeth is powerful;—This is the most valuable Wealth to be rich in God;—This is the Power to be relyed on, to “be strong in the Lord and in the Power of his Might;” for “blessed is he, that delighteth in the Lord; but cursed is he that trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, and whose Heart departeth from the Lord;—and since the most exalted Station here, is liable to a momentary Dissolution;—” Let him that thinketh he standeth take careful Heed, lest, like Nebuchadnezzar, he suffers a momentary and unexpected Fall.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

(No. 7.) 25th Chapter St Matthew, Verse 46th.

"These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the
Righteous into Life eternal."

Here we see the final Termination of all Mankind
—We see to what at length the Reflections of the Wise and Presumptuous shall come, — To what the Hopes and Fears, — the continual Doubts and Apprehensions of faithless Men shall be reduced, — and to what the Cares of Ambition and Inquietudes of Fortune shall, after all, be changed. — Such at last shall be the formidable Conclusion of all, which shall open to the Sons of Men the Mysteries of Providence, and justify his Conduct in the Government of the Universe. — This Life is only the Commencement of an everlasting Futurity, where we shall meet with Torments everlasting, or Enjoyments immortal; — such shall be the inevitable Lot, either T.H.T. or T.H.A., of all Mankind;

—But Men of abandoned Principles would gladly doubt of a future State, and indeed we cannot be surprized at it; for certainly it is a most frightful Subject to contemplate an Eternity of Misery, and hence they endeavour to forget it, and make themselves easy under their Unbelief.—But, my beloved, this is a Support both Weak and Frail, which I shall endeavour to remove from the human Heart, and also demonstrate to the Dissolute and Abandoned, that they shall survive their Crimes;—and though this Life may put a Period to their Vices, it will not end their Miseries,—and to confound the Impiety of the Wicked, let us attack those weak Pretences on which it depends.—Are then our Bodies animated by the Breath of Immortality? And shall this Breath one Day abandon this terrestrial Mansion, and repair to a Place of Eternity where it shall receive its Reward according to its terrestrial Works?—The Profane oppose this Truth, merely upon the

Uncertainty of a future State.—To this, then, I will oppose the Evidence of Reason,—Reason tells us, that this Uncertainty is suspicious, both upon the Principle, which produces it, and as to the Reason on which it depends.—For how comes this Uncertainty about a future State to have a Place in the Heart of the Wicked?—We need but to return to its Origin to know whether the Interests of Truth, or the Passions of Mankind have created it.—The wicked Man, as well as the Virtuous, is born with Principles of natural Religion, which are immediately repugnant to Vice.—He finds written in his Heart a Law, which condemns Injustice, Violence, and Oppression, and all those Injuries, which he himself cannot bear,—and Education, if he has it, fortifies these Sentiments of Nature, and in a great Degree, enforces the Knowledge,—the Love, and the Fear of a supreme Being; and although Man perceives in himself those Inclinations,

which are opposite to his Duty, yet his Heart sometimes secretly embraces the Cause of Virtue,—even in Defiance of his Weakness.—But these Impressions, by frequent Violation of the Rules of Duty, are gradually defaced.—Opinions favourable to the Wishes of the Abandoned are readily entertained and the Idea of Futurity becomes a blind Chimera, which degraded Reason is not willing to distinguish.—But how have the Wicked attained this Uncertainty? How have they been able to divest themselves of those Ideas of Eternity, which are so conformable to the natural Sentiments of their Hearts, and so agreeable to the Light of Reason? Have they examined? Have they deliberated with themselves? Have they taken all those serious Precautions, which Matters of such Importance deserved? Have they retired from the Commerce of Men in Order to have Leisure for Study and Reflection? I'm afraid they have not,—and thus, they continue to pursue

their blind Folly.—On the Contrary, they feel their Hearts against the Cries of Conscience, and by surrendering themselves up to the Dominion of Vice and Pleasure, they attain to these sublime Notions, as we may justly call them, of Unbelief.—Here then we find the Source of Incredulity in the Corruption of the human Heart.—But produce me, if you can, a Man of Wisdom, Chastity, and Temperance, who believes not in his Maker and the Existence of a future State;—and who views the gross Disorders of unrestrained Passions, as innocent Gratifications.—If the World hath ever observed the Wicked appear wise and temperate,—this was owing either to the Concealment of their Irregularities, that their Impiety might have greater Credit,—or to their being disgusted with Pleasures, which they were no longer able to enjoy,—Intemperance and Debauch had been the first Source of their Irreligion,—their Hearts were corrupted before their Faith was shipwrecked,—it was their Interest to be

lieve, that all ends with their Body, before they embraced such a Persuasion, and a long Habit of Pleasure had disgusted them with Vice, though it had not inspired them with a Love of Virtue.—This is a Matter of no small Consolation to us;—as we are hereby taught, that before we can renounce our Faith, we must renounce our Morals,—our Honesty,—our Shame, and every Sentiment of Humanity; and that in Order to be no more Christians, we must divest ourselves even of the Characters of Men.—Again, this Uncertainty of Futurity is moreover ridiculous, as to the Reasons on which it depends,—for implicitly to embrace the Cause of Unbelief, and to hear without Emotion the Proofs in Behalf of a future State, should, we might readily suppose, be the Result of Reasons, decisive and evincing,—for it is not easy to imagine that any Man should hazard an Interest so serious, upon Reasons that are weak and frivolous;—nor can it seem reasonable for

him to abandon those common Sentiments,—the Faith of his Fathers,—the professed Religion of all Ages, and the Consent of all People,—without being first induced to it by the fancied Evidence of Truth.—But what are those Reasons which have determined him in this Notion?—No one knows, say they, that which passeth in the other World:—We deserve the Death of the Just, and of the Wicked, and none return to inform us of the State of either.—But suppress, I pray, your Surprise at this monstrous Incredulity,—at these accustomed Doubts,—these everlasting Uncertainties,—these chimerical Suppositions, on which it would be highly imprudent to risque the Happiness or Misery even of one single Day; and on which the Unfaithful scruple not to hazard their Eternity,—and this too upon a bad Foundation,—they believe not, because no one has ever returned from the Dead to convince them of the Contrary, and here take an Opportunity to reproach

the Faithful as vulgar Believers,—But, to whether Party are we to adhere?—The Faithful believe in a future State,—on the Authority of the Holy Scriptures,—on the Sufferings of the Apostles, and Deaths of Martyrs, for the Vindication of the Doctrine of a future Life, which also is well confirmed from the Credit of every just Man, that has appeared since the beginning of the World,—but, the Incredulous contradict this on Account of one single Doubt on bare Supposition.—The Sum is,—they suspect only that there is no State of Existence after this, and hence they believe it.—Now which of the two is the Dupe of Credulity?—The Faithful, who is guided by sound Reason,—or he, who is governed by the Weakness of a single Doubt?—In the mean Time the Infidel thinks, he makes a better Use of his Reason, than the Faithful;—he considers the Believing, as weak and credulous Men, while he looks upon himself, as a Man of superior

Understanding, raised above all vulgar Prejudices,—and that his own Reason, though never so Inconsistent to better Judges, and not public Opinion, should direct his Sentiments. —But provided that the ^{Arguments} Agreements on both Sides, were equal, and that the vain Uncertainties of a future State counteracted those solid and convincing Truths, which promise Immortality, it would however be most desirable that the latter should be True, as being a Sentiment full of Honour to Mankind; as it informs and convinces them, that their Origin is celestial, and their Hopes eternal.—And, it were greatly and seriously to be wished, that the Doctrine of Impiety should be false, as being so mortifying and full of Humiliation to Man, for, what does it more, than levels him at once with the Beasts that perish, and by confining his Existence to a short Number of fleet and transitory Days, spent upon Earth. Man, therefore, we might suppose, would, on this.

very Account, embrace the Doctrine of Belief, rather than declare himself in Favour of an Opinion so ignominious to his Nature,—Nor should a Regard to their Honour alone determine Men in Favour of Faith;—their Interest is still a more forcible Motive to belief;—For what can a Man hazard by trusting in a future State, provided he should be deceived? What fatal Consequences will attend his Credulity? He will live with Honour,—Probity,—and Innocence,—He will faithfully discharge the Offices of a Christian; he will moderate his Passions, which being indulged, would have occasioned numberless Anxieties, and have prepared him either for a wretched old Age, or a stubborn continuance in Sin. He will enjoy the Reputation due to Virtue, and the Esteem of those whom alone it is desirable to please; and, provided he should meet with no Recompence in another Life, what has he lost by preparing himself

for it? Nothing—but he has lived agreeable on Earth,
been loved and lamented by all who knew him.—I hope,
what has been said, is sufficient to persuade us to copy
Example of the Man of Faith and Righteousness—where
we shall doubtless purchase to ourselves a Life of immen-
se Glory—when the wicked Unbeliever, shall, with Horror
and Confusion, go away into everlasting Punishment
Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c. Amen

x

(No. 8.) 5th Chapter St. Matthew, Verse 10th.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

None truly can have a juster Claim to so important a Blessing.—He that governs the Passions, and confines them within the Limits of Reason, will never be misled in his spiritual Race.—Though immediate Ruin seems to hover over him,—if he is tried with the most pressing and alluring Temptations, and still perseveres in his Duty to God, certainly his is the Kingdom of Heaven.—The Passions of the Mind may be very strong;—and they are doubtless the main Springs of Action,—for without them Virtue would be divested of all her Charms, and Vice would lose its Name,—nay without them human Life would stagnate and become one insipid Calm; yet, it is not impossible to keep them under a due Regulation;—and hence no one can justifiably plead, from the innate Power

of the Passions, an excuse for Sin,—to plead such an excuse, as this, is to say, we are void of Reason; and thus we set aside that very Principle, which our gracious Creator intended for this Purpose,—to enable us to restrain each inordinate Affection,—to support us under the severest Calamities, and by no Means with an Intent to destroy, but to save the Man.—The great Maxim of the Epicurean Disciple, is, "Let us eat and drink, for To-morrow we die,"—merely with this unreasonable and extravagant Interpretation—Let us eat for eating's Sake, and drink for drinking's Sake,—but, this Doctrine can never stand the Test of the Gospel-Dispensation;—we are here exhorted, "to take no Thought for what we shall eat or what we shall drink,"—signifying, that there are other Objects that more justly Claim our anxious Attention; for these war against the Soul, and utterly destroy the becoming Effects of sound Reason, which alone

is able to curb the wild Sallies, and moderate the vain Desires after this short and fleeting Life.—Let Man survey himself, let him consider his extensive Faculties of Memory and Reflection, and then he will doubtless see the true End and Aim of his Being,—he will discover, why he is distinguished by the peculiar Character of Lord of all the Earth;—and by the Divinity that fires within him, he will see before him an Eternity of Rewards and Punishments, which will be the certain Consequence of his Conduct in this short Scene of Trial,—he will clearly behold his just Duty to God, and readily declare, that though persecuted, yet it is "better to die the Death of the Righteous, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season;"—and he will rejoice to join in that illustrious Catalogue of Worthies, that noble Army of Martyrs, who honored God in their Lives, and in their Deaths, magnified his Holy Name; for "blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness

Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."—This gives me a happy Occasion to lay before you a brief Account of those noble Martyrs.—These were those suffering Heroes, who were complete Masters of Self-denial,—who dignified the Christian Name, with exemplary Temperance,—Meekness,—Patience,—and Charity,—who were chearful under great, complicated, and the severest Hardships,—who contemned Injuries, and despised Death itself.—These are they, " who subdued Kingdoms,—wrought Righteousness,—obtained Promises,—stopped the Mouths of Lions;"—and these are those, " who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the Sword; who wandered about in Sheep and Goat-skins; destitute, afflicted, tormented."—Now were not these distinguished Objects of Virtue, these, who did and suffered such Things for the Sake of Virtue, of God, and his Kingdom,—and who were Men subject to the same Feelings that we are; and exposed to the like alluring Objects to engage

their Attention?—They had equally the same tender Feelings of Pain and Grief, and had no Advantages superior to those which we enjoy.—We have Christ for our Mediator, and the most gracious Offers of his Holy Spirit, to support and conduct us,—for our blessed Lord himself has told us, that “the Holy Spirit shall be given to all those, who ask it.”—Let no Man therefore complain, that his Burthen is heavier than he is able to bear;—let what will be his Situation, if he implores Divine Assistance, he will find it at Hand, ready to strengthen every Infirmary,—and enable him to co-operate with that Grace, which conquers every Temptation,—for as St Paul says, “we are strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man.”—Hence if a Man does not defeat himself by his own Folly, he shall be able to sustain every Weight,—which is a most consolatory Truth,—and cannot but be a great Encouragement to that godlike Mind, wh

continues in the Path of Virtue, unbiassed by the sudden
Irruption of any intruding Vice;—and it is an absolute
Confutation of the Sinner's vile Reasonings, which proceed
from the corrupt Spring of a bad Heart.—Listen to the
Sinner, and he will tell you, that there are in the
Christian Course, many Rocks and Sands, that 'tis
impossible to avoid.—I grant there are many such Ob-
stacles,—many such dangerous Rocks upon which Thousands
have split; but I cannot pronounce them unavoidable,—God
is not that treacherous Being, that will lay Snares to catch
Men;—No—if he suffers them to be tempted, he will not
above what they are able, and will with the Temptation make
a Way for them to escape;—hence, then if we suffer
Shipwreck, it is through our own Negligence,—it is not
from any Difficulty in the Tract; but from a bad
Look-out;—and from hence, we may be fully convinced,
whenever we transgress the Bounds of God's Commands,

we wilfully forfeit the Kingdom of Heaven,—and, for a few momentary Pleasures, become obnoxious to the “Pains of eternal Death.”—Wherever we find the Impression of a divine Seal,—whatever Command carries this Sanction along with it, there should our Attention be particularly centered;—but, when we further consider, that if we act in Conformity to the Commandments of God, we shall appear with him in Glory;—and on the Contrary, that “the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of Disobedience;”—this surely should induce us to bend willingly to persecution,—meet the Sword of Affliction with Composure, nay, rejoice even at Death itself for the Sake of Righteousness, and for the Blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven.—It is, indeed, a deplorable Truth, that the dire Effects of original Sin, is entailed upon the whole Race of Adam.—That inward Depravity, that strong Propensity to Evil then, that began to reign in the first Ages of the World, requires our steadfast Resolutio

and most vigorous Application to subdue; yet, though they became inveterate, they were not incurable.—Though the subtle Attacks of our grand Enemy, who natches our Inclinations, are nicely suited to our Humours and Dispositions, and though they may cost us many painful Struggles, yet, by a steady Perseverance in a brave Resistance, we may still maintain our Post.—Not like that mean and sordid Being, whose whole Views are contracted within the narrow Circle of his Dear-self,—whose whole Business is to scrape and hoard,—who is harassed under the perpetual Drudgery of Increasing, and ever tortured with the frightful Apprehensions of Diminishing his darling Stock; whose Soub is flattered against the tender Eloquence of the mourning Heart and weeping Eye; and who is lost to all the true Pleasures of a communicative Good.—Nor on the other Side, like the voluptuous Prodigal,—who sacrifices Honor, Health, Reputation, and whatever else is

valuable, to the Gratification of a single Hour,—and when Luxury is sated, and Imagination itself is cloyed, see him basely, but in Vain, employ his injured Reason, to assuage the Relish of his palled Appetite, and to feed each dying Flame.—From hence, then, view the proud, ambitious Mortal, who pants after the fantastic Applause of the Multitude; who fondly explores the giddy Height of Fame! laying every Obstacle in his Passage waste before him; and lo! how bitter is the Anguish of Disappointment, when he fails in gaining the wished for Point? And should he succeed, Disappointment haunts him still; he proves all the delightful Promises he made to himself False,—all the visionary Glories vanish,—Expectation is dashed,—and, all is Vanity.—Why, then, will we still persist in catching at the mere Phantoms of Bliss, and grasping the glittering Bubbles of an empty Name,—Let us rather fix our Virtue, though clad in Rags, and visited with a

constant Round of Misfortunes.—Ah! thrice welcome, humble, solitary Virtue! thou Soother of our inward Cares, thou Giver of secret Bliss!—may thou never know, but at a distant View, the Pangs of Pageantry and Pomp,—if thou sufferest, may it be in a true Cause, and thus thy Sufferings shall be turned into Joy, and all thy Mourning shall shortly give Way to everlasting Pleasures,—but how vastly different is the painful and distressed Condition of Vice; “when Men shall seek Death, but shall not find it, and shall desire to die, but Death shall flee from them;—for who among us can dwell with the devouring Fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting Burnings?” Yes, Misery ever was, and ever will be, the necessary and unavoidable Result of offending against the Light of Reason and the Convictions of Conscience.—Whenever we infringe upon these, we shall feel the pernicious Consequences
“such a Conduct, as surely, and as naturally, as Heat

is produced by Fire, or an acute Pain, in a wounded Body.—May we henceforth, then, all of us, follow the Example of the Good and Virtuous,—him, who enjoys every Gratification of Sense, so as to sit easy upon his Mind,—his Body,—and his Fortune.—This is the Man of true Greatness,—This is he, who “by the Shield of Faith, the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit,” obtains the noblest Victory upon Earth,—the Conquest of himself.—And what renders his Situation peculiarly blessed, is a consciousness of supporting the Dignity of a rational, and securing to himself the Friendship of a Divine Being.—This is the Man that endures with Composure the wanton Insults of the proud and empty, or the Ridicule of the fashionable Sinner,—and this is he, who patiently bears Persecution, even for Righteousness Sake,—and no Wonder, when we remember, that, though seemingly unhappy, he ever enjoys a Mind at Ease; from the most substantial

Assurance, and the genuine Offspring of a clear Conscience.—He knows from hence that he shall be everlastingly regarded by him, who said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."—May such then be our Example, and may we all of us shortly enjoy such an Assurance, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c. Amen.

X
(No. 9.)

Pſalm 52d, Verſe 1ſt.

"Why boaſteſt thou thyſelf in Miſchief, O mighty Man?"

This is a melancholy Reflection truly!—And yet ſuch a Reflection cannot but take Place, if we obſerve the general Actions of Men:—How ready.—how propenſe are they in common not to uſe, but to abuſe their Power?—Look into the World,—caſt your Eye through all Ranks of People; and you will find them load it over their Dependents:—Even the very ſovereign, if they have any Dependents, are guilty of this, though, in the Interviſt, they ſincerely ſeek and complain of it in others:—A Vice therefore capable of benighting ſo great a Part of Mankind muſt doubtleſs poſſeſs ſome Charm.—Let us then enquire into the proper Uſe and Abuſe of Power.—A Power to protect the injured and oppreſſed,—to relieve the Indigent and Miſerable,—to encourage Worth and Merit,—to contribute to the rational Comfort and Happineſs of

Mankind, is the Object of Desire to every humane and good Heart:—An Employment in these Offices is certainly the highest Dignity and Happiness of human Nature.—They give Scope to all our finer Affections, and teem with solid and substantial Joys to the good Man,—his Delight is exquisite, and Pleasures true,—for the more extensive such a Power is, the more Blessings it bestows to the human Species.—Again,—We may venture to desire so much Power, as to preserve us from Injury and Oppression, and procure us the real Necessaries and Comforts of Life,—was Authority sought after in these and such like Purposes, we need not care how much of it fell to any Man's Lot:—But alas! fatal Experience shews, that it may be misapplied, and that there are not Men wanting, who can glory in, and boast of their Power to do Mischief.—Deluded,—wretched,—foolish Mortals!—This constitutes the very Nature of Tyranny,—odious to God, and dreadful to rational Men.—The imaginary

Greatness, which such a Power inspires, would inevitably vanish, would Men exert their Reason,—for where can be the Pleasure in Mischief?—Can Men vainly please themselves with a supple Cringe indebted to their Cruelty?—A Respect not due to their Merit; but paid them through Fear.—Such Honor,—vile Honor as this, the fierce voracious Animal shares with them.—See the Tyrant himself shivering before the ghastly Beast, and paying him the very Honor on which he stupidly plumes himself.—A Power undirected by Wisdom, and far distant from Goodness and Mercy, and so much from being honourable, that it is an Object of Horror.—Let then the mighty Man view himself in this his true Light, and ask, if he can boast himself in Mischief—It may be asked, where are the Charms of Power to wicked Men?—The Answer is obvious,—it enables them to gratify their Passions at the Expence of Truth, Justice, and Humanity.—Check a wicked Man in his inconsistent Gratifications,

and he will ask you,---who are Lords over him, to controul him in the Indulgence?---Nay, should the low-lived Mob, the Scum of the Earth restrict him,---who dares move his Tongue against him?---Even the Sight of Discontent must be suppressed,---at once you see all Things for his Use or rather Abuse:---To fear God, or regard the lower Ranks of Men, would ill suit his haughty and wicked Infotence.---Again, Power has Charms for wicked Men as it indulges their Pride with little Interruption.---Those below them, dare not oppose, and behold from hence,---What big swelling Thoughts from Things in themselves trivial! What neglect of every Thing, great, noble, and amiable,---for the glare of Wealth and Power! The Imagination,---the whole Mind teems with Absurdities:---But tell me,---where is the Man,---that dare bring these vague Ideas to the Test of Truth and Reason?---None,---could Reason have Place, it might lead him to a Train of Reflections, which

would reduce him to mean Insignificance, and then to himself his real Self:—This would shock and amaze him,—this could never be borne by him, who cannot relish true Greatness, and particularly, if the evil Spirit could be banished for a Moment,—yet, in seeking rest, I'm afraid it would find none, and therefore must in Course return to its airy Palace:—Truth must again be kept aloof; and Flattery,—Sycority,—and vain Glory shall reassume their wonted Sway,—enter in and dwell there.—Here we often find Scepticism, Libertinism, and Riot;—the homely Garb of Truth is thrown off; and the still Voice of Reason is drowned in the Tumult; Conscience is forbid, and Nothing but the exulting Voice of Authority bears Sway:—"Get ye behind me," says the mighty Man, "ye Sons of Gravity,—ye Disturbers of my lulling Slumbers; I would none of your Counsel, and hate your Reproof;—Prophecy not unto me right Things;—Prophecy unto me smooth Things.—Let your very Mein imply, that all Per-

fection is here."—Thus he raves,—thus he is obstinately resolved to gratify his Passions, and his Pride; and ~~then~~ he bespeaks a temporary Peace to his Soul.—The Croucher for a Piece of Bread,—the fawning Sycophant,—the cunning Knave,—the simple Gazer at Pomp, still swell his Vanity, and puff up his imaginary Greatness.—The distant Ave with which they approach him is the ill prepared Opiate, that gives Giddiness at the Time, and leaves Stupor behind it; this whets the Edge of his Tyranny, and hence he deals Firebrands, Arrows, and even worse than Death upon those, who cannot,—will not see, as he sees.—Thus Power has been the Portion of the worst of Men, and has been acquired by the vilest and most degenerate Arts; and therefore, cannot in itself be any Proof of Excellence;—Can Terror add this Proof?—By no Means,—Can we believe Light to be Darkness, or Darkness Light, because we are told to believe it at our Peril? The Dread of Mischief may force Men to say so, and

put on an Air of awful Submission,—yet, a Man must be stupidly ignorant, who can exult in that Homage paid him at the Expence of Cruelty, or from a Dread of Punishment. Where Homage is not the Result of a voluntary Acknowledgment of Excellence, it is merely insignificant,—here is no Merit or real Worth.—Dignity! Dignity! Oh Dignity!—It is astonishing to hear Bodies of Men publicly talk of maintaining their Dignity, by holding the Rod of Correction over the Child of Truth.—But would such Men deign to reflect one Moment, and behold infinite Power, causing all Things to work together for the good of the Creation, how widely would the Scene change; instead of Cruelty and Revenge, Lordship and Dominion, I'm persuaded Tendernefs and Mercy would sway.—The Mighty would doubtless turn his Attention to the Father of Mercies, in whom they live, move, and have their Being;—knowing he must not,—he cannot expect Mercy,

if he has shewn none.—This is a bitter Reflection upon him,
yet as true, as bitter,—The Imagination recoils at the Thought,
and the Soul shrinks back upon herself under the dreadful
Idea of falling into the Hands of the ever living God.—
Our Glory, our Interest, and our Happiness consists in
being kind, benevolent, and merciful,—Our Heavenly
Father, our Almighty Judge, who should be our Pattern,
is ever Kind, is always merciful,—but how different
are the Manners of Men,—it is not unusual to see them
grind the very Faces of the Poor, and hold up the shining
Particles for their Admiration,—The gaudy Trappings
thus acquired, I hope, that all here will consider them
as the filthiest of Rags.—To the philosophical Eye, they
are a thin Covering to the corrupt Heart,—but to distribute
our superfluous Possessions in a judicious Beneficence,—to
draw out our Soul to the Hungry,—to cloath the Naked,—
and to abridge some Indulgences to the lower Part of our

Nature for their Sakes, is rational, glorious, and Divine.—
a Man thus acting, thus conducting himself on the Stage
of Life, is truly the Man after God's own Heart.—Our
Affections for Justice, Benevolence, and Mercy, are cer-
tainly the noblest Parts of our Nature.—From their
Gratification must ever arise the supreme Happiness of
intelligent Beings. The Pleasures from thence, far from
tumultuous, are mild, solid, and permanent.—If this
seems too abstracted, a familiar Instance will clearly illustrate
it. Suppose, indulging myself with useless Extravagance;
on a short Reflection, I find, I am squandering away
my Substance very unprofitably; on which Account, I im-
mediately apply the Surplus to the Necessity of a distressed
Family,—and I presently see my Design happily com-
pleted.—In which Case, pray will I not consider myself
doubly repaid,—Certainly the Satisfaction of seeing a poor
Man again able to support industriously a helpless Family,

would far exceed these Joys inspired by fruitless Indulgence.—
The consoling Reflection would attend me in my retired
Hours, when I should recall the other with Disgust.—
Again,—There is a Species of Distress, felt under Men
of Authority, which is little known, and too little attended
to.—We often meet with Men, whose Delicacy of Con-
stitution and Sentiment, renders them unhappy in that
Station in which they are obliged to act,—they are unhappy,
not so much from Poverty, as from the haughty Insolence of
those, who by a preposterous Figure of Speech, are called their
Betters.—As they have more lively Conceptions of, so they are
more hurt by this Insensibility, than the Bulk of Mankind;
—and therefore, a proper Regard to this their finer Mould,
would shew a Correctness of Judgment, and a Generosity of
Heart truly laudable.—Hence, what I wish most ardently
here to inculcate, is a tender and kind Attention to Depen-
dents in general, remembering that the greatest Man upon

Earth has a Master in Heaven.—Connections and Dependencies are absolutely Necessary in this imperfect State, and give Scope for the Exercise of our virtuous Affections.—Let us then allow, of our Abundance, a comfortable Support to our Dependents, according to the Offices they are engaged in,—protect them against the Injuries of others, and charitably attend to their real Distresses.—Thus, we would smooth the Brow of Care, and mitigate the Miseries of Life.—What Heart would not leap for Joy, at the Approach of the prophetic Prospect, when the Earth should be thus full of the Knowledge of the Lord; when Men would beat their Swords into Plow Shares, and their Spears into pruning Hooks; when the savage Parts of Nature would forget their Ferocity, become mild, gentle, and endearing; when the Wolf would dwell with the Lamb, the sucking Child play on the Hole of the Aspidochelone, and the maimed Child put his Hand on the Cockatrice's Den.—

Is this then a Prospect that justly Charms?—If so,—let each contribute his Share to establish it,—and may God grant us his gracious Assistance in our Endeavours,—may he enable us to love, as Brothers, without Dissimulation,—not only in Tongue like the Jargon of those, who wish to deceive, but in Sincerity and Truth.—Thus we shall fulfil the Law of Kindness,—become fit Examples,—and be justly deemed good Men.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

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Christmas Day.

(No. 10.) 1st Chapter Timothy, 1st Epistle, Verse 15th.

"This is a faithful Saying, and Worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners."

A most gracious Assurance!—certainly on hearing the News every Heart must sing for Joy.—News of the highest Moment,—nay, the best that ever Heaven sent upon Earth.—"Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners."—Is it possible any Circumstance could equal this?—Could Mortals covered with Transgression ever expect it?—Ever expect that the great and eternal Son of the Heavenly Father would thus stoop from the Height of infinite Perfection, to release worthless Men from the Dominion of Sin.—Yet this, out of his matchless and condescending Goodness, he effectually did.—He came among us, instructed us, and dictated to us the best Book that ever was wrote,—and to complete our Redemption, and free us from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin, he

scrupled not to offer himself a voluntary Oblation, and suffer the most ignominious Death, even the Death of the Cross,—a Method at that Day used only to terminate the Existence of the most infamous Malefactors.—How gross then must the Sins of Man have been, that no less a Personage than the eternal Son of God could expiate.—No other Blood was away, but that of the immaculate Lamb.—But some are still daring enough to dispute, nay even to deny the Being of a Saviour upon Earth.—Yet these might easily be confuted, and set right, would they only hear, and impartially attend to the Prophets, and the Circumstances, that attended his Birth.—The Prophets all agree in one common Conclusion, and what they predicted, our Saviour in every Sense exactly fulfilled.—But, let us begin at the Fountain Head,—and consider the first Promise to our first Parents.—After the Devil had exercised all his Cunning, and defeated their Innocence, it was misd, that " the Seed of the Woman should bruise the

Serpent's Head."—From hence it is plain that to do this some Person was to be expected,—who would destroy the Works of Satan,—procure a Pardon for fallen Man, and restore him to a State of Holiness,—Happiness,—and Immortality,—and certainly this was the greatest Blessing that God could possibly bestow upon the Posterity of Adam,—consequently all Nations were anxious for its Completion;—and as it was a Matter of the highest Moment, it was natural to suppose, that when the Time came, there would not be wanting Men to scruple the Truth, and raise Objections to the Reality of every Assertion, or even Miracles, though never so clear and convincing:—But how convictive is every Circumstance.—When we read of "a Prophet like unto Moses, who should be the Desire of all Nations, and the Delight of the Children of Israel,"—and when we compare with this the Birth and Works of our Saviour, and the Attention paid him by his Followers,—we must be utterly lost in Ignorance not to

believe;—and further, When it is said that he should be "the Chosen, the Elect of God," and that "he should reign as King, and prosper;"—When we read of the Messiah in Daniel, as a Person, who should "make Reconciliation for Iniquity, —make an End of Sin, and introduce in their Stead everlasting Righteousness;"—and, when we consider the Life of Christ, and the Dictates of his Gospel, we must conclude that he was the true Messiah, and that "Seed of the Woman" promised from the Beginning.—Nothing can be more reasonable than this Interpretation, and particularly from a striking Parity of Ideas in different Places, which, would Time permit, might easily be produced.—Suffice it then to declare and affirm, that Christ was the true Saviour that was to come, and not another.—Look at his Revelation, and tell me, who dares dispute it?—The Salvation he wrought,—the Laws he gave,—and the Covenant he made, were such, according to the Prophets, were well adapted to the Capa=

cities and Conditions of all Mankind, — and as the Benefit was intended for all the World, — so he caused the Gospel to be preached to all Nations, — sending out proper Men, endued with proper Powers for so great a Work. — What a surprizing Instance of condescending Love is here displayed? — How amazing to behold the Son of the immortal God, thus quit the Bosom of his Father, to dwell among, and instruct worthless, rebellious Sinners in Righteousness? — Though he thought it not Robbery to be equal with God, yet he scrupled not at a Word to leave his Kingdom, — to take upon him a Body of Clay, — to be wrapt in swaddling Clothes, and laid in a sordid Manger, — all which he readily did to serve the most unworthy Objects of his Love. — He vouchsafed to take pity on the wretched and deplorable State of Men, — and descended from Heaven to ease the intolerable Weight they were sinking under; — Nay, he not only thus far debased himself; — but cheerfully submitted to the vilest Usage for the Sins of the World

—O this wonderful Kindness!—Where is the Desert of ours to merit it?—What is there in us, that claimed such a Favour?—Nothing,—It is but just then that we celebrate this Day, with such suitable Homage, as is justly due to the Deserts of so great a Work.—A Work that entirely delivered us from the worst, and most intolerable Slavery,—and freed us from the Servitude of the most implacable Enemy to the Salvation of Man:—for, “By his Stripes we were healed, and by his Blood he completed our Redemption.”—John the Baptist calls him, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World:”—And certainly it was a just Appellation, for he was native Innocence itself, “he did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.”—“When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.”—All which, and much more, he willingly endured to work out our Happiness;—old Establishments he dissolved, and gave us a new Covenant, pregnant with the best Instructions and Assurances.—That

Law, which promised Nothing, but inevitable Ruin to the Souls of Men; he utterly abolished:—That Law, which tells us, that “the Wages of Sin is Death,” without any Mitigation of the positive Degree:—For, those that lived under it, from this Sentence, had no hopes left,—and were obliged to rest under this miserable Construction,—“die eternally:”—But the painful Rites of Moses, he entirely abrogated, and obtained us a better Ministry, established upon better and more certain Promises, and therefore ought to be revered by all Mankind.—By this League we are comfortably assured, that he, who falls, may rise again,—emerge from a State of Sin and Wickedness;—to a confident and certain Hope of future, eternal Happiness:—Nay, Christ has in every Respect consulted our highest Felicity, and omitted Nothing that was likely to increase, and perfect it;—He not only purged us from the Dregs of Sin,—but has laid us down an infallible Rule to obtain the utmost Degree of Glory our Natures are capable of

an endless and immortal State,—and what is still more astonishing,—as the Frailty of our Nature is such, that we cannot always be guarded against the subtle Attacks of Vice, he has promised that he will accept the Services of a sincere Heart, instead of an unblemished Innocence, and of our general good Intentions, (weak as they are) instead of an unerring Obedience;—and when we further consider on whom these Privileges were bestowed, and how far they extended, we must be still further lost in Admiration;—for, the whole Race of Mankind, in this their degenerate and lost Condition, had an offer of all these.—Among whom, in a comparative Sense, there was none that did Good, no not one,—that did in the least Merit so mighty a Favor.—The World was over-run with Wickedness, and as it were, drowned in Iniquity,—full of Idolatry and Superstition,—and all Mankind wretchedly debauched in their Principles, and tted in their Manners;—yet all this still did not

add so much to the Unworthiness of such Love to the World,
—as, the cruel Treatment our Saviour met with upon Earth;
—the uncivil and barbarous Usage he endured surpasses
all Conception, and had he not been of infinite Perfection,
Patience, Long-Suffering and Mercy,—it would have been
intolerable, and he certainly would have poured the Thunder-
Bolts of his Wrath upon his Tormenters.—Yet his Kindness,
far surpassing Imagination, still, notwithstanding the Malice,
Persecution, and Treachery of the World, would not deprive
it of the Advantage of his Incarnation, and the blessed
Overtures of his Gospel,—he still persisted in finishing that
Point, he so happily did complete, for the Benefit and
Blessing of future Ages.—This still magnifies, if possible,
the Love of God,—see how he has, in every Respect, studied
our Good, and even when we had deserted our own Interests,
and consequently were entirely unworthy his Attention,—
for consider, who it was, that was doing all this for us.—

It was no less a Personage, than the only begotten, eternal Son, and immaculate Lamb of God,—This was he, who thus came into the World, took upon him the Form of a Servant, and Likeness of Man to save Sinners.—And since it is clear, that our Saviour, the Son of God, did come, as has been described;—how ought we to revere his Name, and celebrate this Day in Remembrance of such condescending Goodness;—Goodness that voluntarily descended from the Height of infinite Perfection, to bless its daring Enemies.—Let us then, my beloved,—let us waft up to Heaven, our sincerest Praises and Thanksgivings for those inestimable Blessings our most condescending Saviour has thus effected for the whole Race of Adam;—No Strains can be too lofty.—Consider how the Angels themselves, and all the Host of Heaven broke forth into Hymns at this divine Mission;—Nay, the lofty Arch of Heaven was filled with divine Music, and rung with Jubilee.—Let us then join

cheerfully in the melodious Concert,—to the Praise of the
New-Born King,—Our Obligations are equally as great;
—Our Redemption equally as necessary,—which could
not possibly be otherwise obtained, but through the Effusion of
Christ's Blood.—And finally, let us follow the Steps, and
imitate the excellent Example of our Blessed Lord,—As God
loved us, so let us love one another,—This is our Happiness
and Perfection; and therefore, I should think, does not Need
many Arguments to recommend it to our strictest Attention.—
All I shall say then further is, that as it is unquestionably
True, that Christ came into the World to save Sinners,—
so it is equally True, that unless we follow the Precepts of
his Doctrine, we shall never inherit the Benefits of his
Mission.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

"Thou hast put Gladness in my Heart, more than in the Time that their Corn and their Wine increased."

The Desire of Happiness,—the Thirst after true Joy and Pleasure, are the first and most powerful Objects of every wise Man's Care;—but how many are there that mistake the true Road to this Happiness?—Many—too many foolishly conclude that it is confined to Sense,—to pampering the Body, and to the gratifying the many and unreasonable Desires thereof;—they fondly imagine that these far surpass those Pleasures which are spiritual, which flow from well-doing and from a just and holy Life,—and from this false and mistaken Conclusion, Virtue often becomes much neglected in the World.—Hence it is that Religion itself is vilified, and represented by Libertines, as destructive to Happiness, and a gross Intruder upon our Joys.—But the Psalmist thought

very differently,—nay Experience told him, that Religion was so far from being an Enemy to Pleasure, that it was always a Heightener of it,—that though it moderated our Appetites, yet it deprived us of no real,—no solid Joys.—Consider, it forbids us Nothing innocent and inoffensive; but allows us many Indulgences, even of the sensitive Kind, with Moderation,—as St Paul dictates to Timothy, in his 1st Epistle, “ Drink no longer Water, but use a little Wine for thy Stomach’s Sake, and thine often Infirmities; ”—and further, you may see it is so far from interrupting our Joys, that it enhances and improves them, for “ all its Ways are Pleasantness, and all its Paths are Peace.”—No wonder, therefore, the holy Psalmist, was so transported with the Contemplation of it.—He envies not the intemperate Person the supposed Pleasure of his Debauch,—nor the Glutton the imaginary Joys of his Surfeit.—He vies not with the Covetous for Riches, nor thirsts with the Ambitious after the fading Echoes of Renown.—Purity of

Heart and Integrity of Life are to him a continual Feast.
—Let others place their Happiness, if agreeable to them, in sensual Satisfaction, he, for his Part, pitches upon God, in whom he was well convinced his Felicity consisted:—"Thou," says he, "hast put Gladness in my Heart more than in the Time that their Corn and their Wine increased."—As much as to say,—the great Joy of Men is generally in the Abundance of earthly Blessings:—But thou, O Lord, dost give more Joy to my Heart, than all their Affluence can afford them.—Their full stored Barns,—their Presses overflowing with Wine, never can impart that Gladness and Satisfaction to their Minds,—that thy blissful Presence in my Soul conveys to me.—I deny not but the sensual Man may have some Pleasure in his Enjoyments,—he may possess the good Things that are present;—he may revel with his Plenty,—he may fill himself with his Corn and Wine, and other Blessings, and may have his Share of Voluptuousness; but the Mirth

which he enjoys, is only a simple Taste of true Delight;—
His Laughter is elegantly compared, by Solomon, to the crackling
of Thorns in a Flame,—“ it may be loud, but lasteth not.”
Hence then to cure effectually the Anguish and Uneasiness of
the Mind, to bring a lasting Cheerfulness upon the Face,
and to dispel the Clouds of Misery that may hang over us, is
a divine Work:—A Work that must begin at God, and con-
tinue in a constant Obedience to his Will:—Such a Work as
this cannot fail to produce always pleasing Reflections in us,
—it will remove our Fears, and fill our Souls with joyful
Expectations.—Holiness and Integrity are productive of in-
credible Comforts,—and Nothing can be more calm than that
Soul, which is happily freed from the Dominion and Slavery
of Sin:—for, the righteous Man findeth such Peace of Conscience,
has such firm Assurance of eternal Glory, and is so raised above
the World, that he meets every Occurrence with Complacency
and Delight:—Tis no paltry Joy which Religion gives,

when a Christian can reflect upon his own Purity with Satisfaction, and look back upon himself and say, "I have done every Thing that sound Reason bid me,—and thus through God's Grace I have, as much as possible, answered the End of my Creation."—Again, The Word of God, if duly attended to, will teach us to correct those impetuous Passions, which are apt to hurry us on into very fatal Extremes, and which terminate in numberless Vexations and Inquietudes not to be surmounted. —Let a conscientious Man, a Man of Experience tell me, if it is not much more pleasant to him, in the Result, to check his sensual Inclinations, and exercise an Empire over them, than to be led captive by them, and to be carried headlong with every inordinate Passion:—The former gives Gladness to the Heart,—the latter fills you with perpetual Inquietudes:—Nay, it will imprint a secret Dread upon the Mind, and make you sorrowful even in the midst of Jollity:—But Christianity has provided a Remedy for the greatest Guilt,—its Oil,—it

Balsam is sufficient to heal the most inveterate Sore of a wounded Conscience;—It gives us Grounds of Hope on our Return to our Duty, and assures us, if we will, we may be well.—Now what Joy,—what Gladness must this impart to the Sinner's Soul, how must it cheer his Spirits, and settle his Mind in Peace? The religious good Man, who delights in Virtue, may rest well assured of the loving Kindness and Mercy of God,—for the Lord takes Pleasure in them that fear him, and keep his Commandments.—Let a Man be surrounded with Calamities,—let his daily Visitation be one continued Scene of Distress,—let him experience Nothing but Hardships,—turn as he will, let him meet the Storm of Affliction,—and let Adversity be his constant and invariable Companion.—Yet, if he trusts in his God,—if he puts on the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Virtue,—if Religion is his right Arm,—he shall possess more real Gladness of Heart,

than that covetous, miserable Being, who seems to encompass every Comfort of Life.—The one is ever reaching for more, ever murmuring, discontent and unhappy,—trivial Accidents distress him, and the least Misfortune costs him numberless sleepless Nights,—whilst the other, humbly trusting in the Mercy of God, sits smiling under the deepest Afflictions?—Though he seems as if dying,—yet behold, he lives;—if chastened,—yet, he is not killed,—if sorrowful,—yet, he is always rejoicing;—if poor,—yet, he is rich,—and though he seems to have Nothing,—yet, he possesses all Things. Who would not then be Virtuous, for Virtue's Sake,—for doubtless the good Man, as he nearly approaches the Likeness of God, may, without Presumption, expect that at some Period he will remember and reward his Goodness,—that he will encourage his Virtue, by the Operations of his Love, and that according to his Promises, he will manifest himself unto him, and give him to drink of the Rivers of

Pleasures,—and when God thus unfolds himself and his Love to the Soul, how must it run over with ecstacy of Joy, though the Body at the same Time is loaded with the Wounds of the most pungent Calamities and keenest Distresses,—though it can find no Quiet here,—yet his Soul is well assured of future Happiness:—and when he arrives at the last Stage of Life, and here examines his Conduct,—what Pleasure shall fill his Soul, when Reflection tells him, that though the Character he has played upon the Stage of Life has been but low, yet he has well performed his Part,—for, he finds his Heart unembarrassed, and Conscience clear;—Yet further,—The Joys of Religion in this Life, even in the most refined Degree, are but tasteless and insipid, compared with those hereafter; nor does Virtue meet with its full and perfect Reward;—But look forward beyond the dark and silent Grave, and see what Pleasures are here,—here are ravishing Delights and

transporting Joys that shall never have an End,—such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard of;—neither hath it entered into the Mind of Man to conceive any Thing equal. Let then the beatific Vision of God, be ever before our Eyes, —let this be the grand Aim of all our Works,—Our Time here at longest is but short, therefore if we stick close to our Duty,—our light Afflictions shall soon Work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory,—Let us rather suffer Affliction with the Sons of God, than even wish to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season,—for certainly, when we think on the Reward due to the Just and Pious,—we must conclude it much preferable to be Men of a pure Conversation, than Lords of Thousands of Gold and Silver,—look at the young Profligate, who is born to an Estate sufficient to make, not only one, but many reasonable Families peculiarly happy,—see him inconsiderately rake it away from Tavern to Tavern, and

from thence to the shameful Extravagance of the gaming Board;
—behold him in a few Years furrounded with Poverty,
and unable to discharge his just Debts,—in this Situation
view him dragged into Prison, where, to take a last Survey
of him, see him languish a while, and without a Friend
to assist him, die at last in Misery,—in Rags,—
and Disgrace; But from hence, let us turn our Eyes
upon him, who had sufficient out of a little,—Here,
we see the Scene mightily changed; from Profligacy clad
in the dismal Garb of Misery and Want,—We behold Virtue
smiling in Affluence and Plenty,—sufficient for itself,
and something to spare to the Needy.—A Man of this
Character, is beloved by his Friends,—admired by his
Acquaintance, and caressed by his Neighbours,—his Broom
is unruffled with Care, his Mind undisturbed by Anxiety,
and his Body free from unnatural Infirmities.—Nay,
“ the Path of the Just is like the shining Light, that

shineth more and more unto the perfect Day."—What Man then, that has his reasonable Faculties about him, will pursue that Course, which is diametrically opposite to Reason, and which will doubtless hurry him down the Hill of vain Amusements into the Pit of irretrievable Ruin;—such Amusements may please the sensitive Faculties, but can never gratify the extensive Ideas of an immortal Soul; and he, who places his supreme Good in animal Gratifications, (as he is a Slave to capricious and variable Passions) must be liable to be disgusted with his very Pleasures,—Would we then be happy in this World, and would we hope for Salvation in that which is to come,—would we wish to be partakers of that Joy and Gladness which holy David esteemed above all the Emptiness and Vanity of this World,—Then, let us carefully endeavour to hold Communion with God, —to cultivate the solid Principles of Virtue, which will exalt our Nature, and make us more extensively Useful +

Mankind.—And since no true Satisfaction, no real Pleasure is to be found, but beyond the Grave, and in drawing near unto God,—Let us therefore turn unto him, and see how gracious the Lord is;—let us beseech him to satisfy us with his Mercy, and that soon, so that we may rejoice and be glad all the Days of our Life.—Let the Men of this World have their Portion of this Life,—but may Heaven grant us to behold the Presence of God in Righteousness, so that, when his Glory shall appear, we may be perfectly satisfied with it,—and may we ever with holy David declare, “Thou, O God of my Righteousness, hast put Gladness in my Heart, more than in the Time when their Corn and their Wine increased.”—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

(No. 12.)

4th Chapter Jeremiah, Verse 18th.

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"Thy Way and thy Doings have procured these Things unto thee: this is thy Wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine Heart."

This is alluding to the Sinfulness and Sufferings of Judah,—and I think we may with Justice observe, that our Situation still bears some Similarity with that of Judah; it was wicked,—and so are we;—it suffered justly for its Wickedness; and what better can we reasonably expect:—Can I madly look for a Reward to Disobedience, if I daily affront my Maker?—can I vainly flatter myself I shall obtain Mercy, without the least Merit, merely because God is merciful?—This would truly be a wild Confidence and a Reed too slender for the Weal of a precious Soul to be ventured upon;—a wicked Course of Life cannot but be productive of Bitterness and the worst of Consequences,—its Effect is naturally and unavoidably the

Corruption of our Nature, and a corrupt Tree must bring forth corrupt Fruit.—How worthy and noble was the Soul of Man when first created!—How was it illuminated with God's Knowledge? How enflamed with his Love? How endowed with Righteousness? and how conjoined in Unity with its omnipotent Maker?—But how! alas! how wretched and miserable is Man become by Disobedience?—What Blindness veils his Understanding?—What Perverseness in his Heart?—What Averseness to Goodness?—What running into forbidden Mischiefs, and all excess of Riot?—But what better is to be expected from him, who forsakes his Maker, and seeks for his Guide, the wicked Devices of his own blind and vicious Heart?—Which leads him to grieve and provoke his Protector, Benefactor, and Defender, who liberally bestows upon him all the Blessings of Life,—and how contrary is such a Disposition to an honest,—candid, and a generous Mind?—I 'tld not we all acknowledge it very wrong to embrace, or

fraudulently take away another Man's Property,—more if he is a just and good Man, and much more if his Confidant betrays him in his Trust, and returns him Evil for Good.—Then, I'm forry to observe that this is too often our Case with God,—we offend him unjustly, and provoke him without a Cause; nay some are so daring and ungrateful as to use his Blessings only as Instruments and Occasions, whereby to disobey and transgress his Laws:—But did they reflect a Moment, did they consider how frail they are,—how liable to be dissolved, and that the Health and Strength of Man is subject to a Minute's Warning and momentary Stroke,—they certainly would be more cautious in the Indulgence of Sin,—or did they consider whose Servants they are, that they are only Sojourners here, and Slaves to him, whose Omnipotence enables him to strike them dead in the very Act of Wickedness, they doubtless would pay more Respect to their Ways and their Doings, for how miserable must the State of that Man be, who dies in

so untimely a Moment? Miserable to the last Degree to have the Soul separated from God, and consigned to perpetual Torments and eternal Night,—“where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched;”—A Misery that far surpasses the Power of Words to express,—nay far outreaches Thought,—and we may bless God for our Ignorance, and it behoves us heartily to pray,—that we may never Experience such a Knowledge.—Again, I presume it is not a Secret to you,—that Men first forsook God to serve their own Pleasures, which justly provoked Heaven to shower down a Deluge to drown the whole Universe, eight Persons excepted.—Nay, so intolerable was their Guilt, that all living Creatures upon the Face of the Earth were consumed by the Contagion of it,—through this,—Sodom and Gomorrah were swallowed down into a Lake of Fire and Brimstone,—and it is for this Cause, that Mankind is visited with Sorrows,—pined with Sickness and Want,—and is surrounded with Cares and Troubles,—and this it is, that has tinfel-

over the short and worthless Enjoyments of this Life, and filled them so with Vanity, that they afford scarce the Shadow of real Satisfaction;—and this is that, which has paved the Road through Life, as it were, with the Points of Spears, that pierce the very Vitals of the Soul through with bitter and insupportable Torments:—Nay, so odious was the Sin of Man, so bitter in its Consequence, that Nothing could sweeten it,—but the precious Blood of God's own eternal Son,—Nothing less than this could expiate us from that Punishment, which was its due Reward, till he was crowned with Thorns,—lashed with Scourges,—torn with Nails,—fed with Vinegar and Gall,—and crucified among Thieves, as a Thief and a Traitor. —Oh horrid!—dreadful Scene!—this scarce could have been expected from Barbarians:—No,—this was the Summit of all Barbarity, and could not but be an unspeakable Provocation to Heaven, sufficient to bring down the Thunder Bolts of his ~~justice~~ Indignation upon us.—Further,—What a

Potion must it still be to the Mind of Man, when he reflects, on glorious a Creature he had been, had Disobedience never entered his Breast;—had it not been for this Stain, David tells us, he had been but a little lower than the Angels,—crowned with Glory and Honor:—He had Beauty in his Person,—Majesty in his Countenance, and a full Authority over the Works of God, in this his lower World.—But how much more noble still was the inner Man,—here was a perspicuous Light in the Understanding, and a true Desire after pure Knowledge.—But alas! all these Things in their best Part are lost, and can only be recovered by Grace, and that too in but an imperfect Manner:—Because, though the Soul is redeemed, justified and sanctified by the Grace of God, and by Mercy in Christ Jesus,—yet it is still under the Confiners of a mortal fleshly Body, infected and poisoned with Sin.—But having, in a great

11 Here, regained what we lost in Adam, let us consider

carefully what we lose by our own Transgressions, under the State of Grace;—By Faith in Christ Jesus we have made our Peace with God,—we have gained a sweet Tranquillity to our Souls,—we have procured a good Degree of Strength in the Performance of Christian Duties, and have made some Progress in our spiritual Warfare,—yet, though we have, thus far, happily regained our fallen State, if we carelessly suffer ourselves to be captivated with the vain and destructive Temptations of the World,—if we bend to Intemperance,—bend to Covetousness,—and give Way to Anger or Revenge,—we may rest too well assured,—that such Proceedings will be the Decay of Grace, and from hence Remorse of Conscience,—Shame and perpetual Disquietude;—yet remember, that these are the very best Consequences of Sin;—for in some Men after the Commission of a deliberate wilful Sin, will succeed an Hardness of Heart,—Averseness to ~~Devotion~~,—an Uneasiness of Mind,—and after these

most dreadful Fears and Terrors hang upon the Soul—
but even under these, our indulgent Maker often, in his
abundant Mercy, presses the Imposthume with a patient
Sorrow, till he gradually extracts the Guilt.—Is it not
therefore evident, that our own Ways have brought these
Things upon us, and that it is our own Wickedness, which is
thus bitter and reacheth to the Heart:—Let us then always
consider before we do;—weigh the Consequence of our Actions,
and regulate them according to the most probable Event.—We were
created for the Glory of God, in his express Image,—and he
carefully feeds us with his Plenty, and protects us by
his divine Providence,—And shall we dare to offend him,
either in the Body, which is the Temple of the Holy Ghost,
or in the Soul, which is the Sanctuary, wherein he delighteth
to dwell?—Yes, too often we do this, even in the Eyes of
Men; which must be evident to the Eye of God,—that
Eye, to which the most secret Things are open and plain.

and which is of purer Lustre than to connive at Wickedness, and behold it unpunished.—Nay, such is the Perverseness of some, that they dare to treat God with the basest Ingratitude, even when he is plentifully pouring his Blessings, both spiritual and temporal, upon them; and, what renders their Guilt still more odious, they will not acknowledge the Lord's Day.—They barely will say, "this Day is Sunday,"—With an Air rather of Contempt, than of Obedience to the Duty, peculiar and essentially Necessary to this Day,—this Day,—which should be solely appropriated and consecrated to God,—which should be spent in holy Acts of religious Devotion, and in returning Thanks for the many Favours conferred upon us the preceding Days of the Week.—But how many, alas! sacrifice it to their idle Amusements.—How many cannot leave the Bottle, even to serve the King of Kings,—and worse than this, how many spend the whole Day in propagating scandalous

Speeches, to injure the Innocent, and trap the Unwary?—
But Woe unto such, who thus dare openly rob God of that
Day he hath reserved for himself;—Who dare blaspheme
him, when they should be publicly Singing his Praises,—
or prosecute their secular Concerns, when they should be serving
him in the Assembly of his Saints.—Pray, what Advantage
can we receive from such a Conduct? If I see right, our
Traffic is laid.—We barter the Service of God, for the Service
of his open Enemy, who may promise largely, but the
End is an everlasting Portion of Bitterness;—The Joys of
this World, which we so much doat upon, are of very short
Duration, and ill worth the Attention we pay them;—
they may please the Body for a Moment, but are badly
suited to the extensive Faculties of the Soul, which is satisfied
with Nothing,—but what is Inexhaustible and Endless,—
its Delights are in the Commands of God, and in the
Contemplation of every Good, which must at last render the

whole rational Nature of Man perfectly Happy.—Let then the Dictates of the Soul ever sway the Desires of the Body, and we cannot fail of gaining that Point, which all Mankind would one Day wish to obtain.—When our Situation is critical, let Reason be summoned to our Aid, and we need not dread a dangerous Fall:—This will always place us upon solid Ground, and always render our Condition, though precarious, yet tolerable;—Whereas Ambition, Covetousness, Sloth, and Prodigality, are ever productive of Disgrace, Anxiety and Trouble,—always perplexing, always racking the Soul with Fears and Disquietudes;—and this is still our own doing,—our own Wickedness that causeth such Bitterness, and thus stingeth the Heart.—Let the Wicked, therefore, forsake his Ways, and the unrighteous Man his evil Thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, who will have Mercy on him, and graciously Pardon his Transgressions,—for if we carry into the next World impure Dispositions, we

will be fit only to converse with the Ghosts of the Wicked, the Sinful, and the Damned;—But if in this Life, we accustom ourselves to commune with God,—to love and praise him—to search out our Spirits,—to obey and imitate him,—we shall then be qualified for the Society of the blessed Spirits in Heaven, and well disposed to be eternally Happy with them in the Life to come,—To which End, let us beseech Almighty God so to prepare our Ways, that we may be fit to enjoy those blessed Mansions of endless Peace and Tranquillity, prepared for those that unfeignedly Love God.—To whom with the Son and Holy Ghost, &c. Amen.

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(No. 13.) 11th Chapter Hebrews, Verse 10th.

"He looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

This is what we should all earnestly look for, and ardently wish to obtain; and the sooner the better,—for here is no continuing City, and the short Duration of it affords Nothing real to charm,—all is but Temporary, and liable to a momentary Dissolution, and even the very best,—the most refined Enjoyments here are but low,—insipid and mean, compared with those the good Man may expect in Futurity.—This the excellent Author of the Text was well aware of,—and he of whom he speaks (viz.) Abraham,—was no less Eminent for his Faith, than St Paul was eloquent and upright.—Faith was so conspicuous in this holy Patriarch, that Scripture calls him,—“the Father of the Faithful, and the Friend of God;”—and therefore he must become to us a

Shining Example of Faith, and a noble Pattern of Obedience.

—In many Instances his Faith and Obedience were conspicuous,—particularly where at a Call he instantly left his own Country and Kindred,—and this he did without the least Demur or Diffusing,—which shews how well he knew the Frailty of this State, and therefore could with Pleasure reside in any Region, or Situation here;—He over-rated not the Pomps, and Pageantry of the World,—and he walked by Faith, and not by Sight,—he believed what he saw not, and wisely “looked for a City, which hath Foundations; whose Builder and Maker is God.”—By Foundations is here meant such a solid and firm Basis, as no Time can waste, no Use make dull,—but such as will last throughout all Ages, and still be the same.—Not like the Fabrics of Men, which may endure for a Season; but must one Day yield to Time, moulder, decay, and be forgot;—who then, that can think as Man, will not take this holy Patriarch's Example for the

Guide of his Faith, and, who will not like him, have a full Assurance of and a confident Expectation of a better Life after this?—He was perfectly happy under the Reproaches of the World, and wished for Nothing equal to the Approbation of God,—and he readily despised the Honor and Applause of popular Vice, and all fashionable Compliances, that he might gain the Kingdom of everlasting Righteousness.—Wherever Fortune removed him, he was always contented, and however Fate decreed his Circumstances, he was ever satisfied,—which shews the World how valuable are the Virtues of Patience and Contentment.—The one preserves us from Despair,—the other supports us in all Difficulties and Distresses.—Man then, if he would consult his own Good, should never cherish in himself a too great Fondness for the Things of this World,—he should behold himself, as Nothing more, than a Stranger and Pilgrim in it,—its Pleasures therefore must not seduce him,—he must not, from a fair Prospect, form romantic Designs,

and Projects about it,—neither should he behold even the very best Things in it, as Ingredients of Happiness,—but only, as Instruments of Virtue, or as short Repasts in our Journey to the heavenly Jerusalem.—If we look at Abraham's Life, we shall at one View behold an excellent Example of this Kind.—A Tent was as useful to him, as the most lofty and glittering Palace,—well knowing that “this World was not the Place of his peaceful Abode.”—Let a good Man look at the many Mansions in his heavenly Father's House, and I'm persuaded, he will set little Value upon his Residence here.—He would soon join with Abraham, in his Esteem of temporal Enjoyments, and only Value them, as they merited.—In them he would endeavour to see better Things,—knowing that he, who bestows on us these Delicacies in Life to its necessary Support, will (if we order our Conversation aright) give us Blessings, as immortal as the Soul, and as valuable as Heaven.—Again,—Abraham looked for a City,—What and where was

this City?—It was not an earthly, but an heavenly City,—
a fixed and settled Habitation,—a City founded by the eternal
Power and infinite Wisdom of God.—As to our Bodies, they
are but mere moving Tabernacles,—temporary Machines,—
Houses that have no Foundations, and which shall soon moulder
into their primitive Dust.—A Disease soon spoils their
Beauty, and, like a Meteor, vanish out of Sight and are
lost in Oblivion.—Whereas the heavenly Jerusalem,—the Throne
of God's Glory, is a City permanent and lasting, and whose
Foundations suffer no Decay.—Because infinite Perfection is
the Architect,—and that which infinite Perfection forms,
must doubtless be Perfect.—But you may ask, why is Heaven
then called a City?—The Answer is,—because in some Re=
spects it is very similar to those on Earth;—for as earthly Cities
contain many Houses;—so in the City of God (as our
Saviour tells us) are many Mansions,—and here every
blessed Soul shall inherit its Mansion in Glory.—The Place

is sufficiently extensive to contain all the blessed Society of Angels,—the glorious Company of the Apostles;—the noble Army of Martyrs,—and the universal Members of the Church in all Times, and through all the Ages of the World, —and Happiness in full Perfection is here their happy Portion for ever and ever:—Here the Citizens, as I shall call them, live together in perfect Harmony, Peace and Love,—they are blessed in themselves, and eternally rejoice in the Felicity of each other.—What Manner of Communication will be among them, is not for us to tell, in this our present imperfect State,—But thus much we are sensible of, that they shall be perfectly acquainted with each other,—and this Acquaintance will be intimate and pleasing; because an uninterrupted Love will unite their Affections.—Again,—this heavenly City we look for, is a Place of infinite Perfection and substantial Happiness,—a Place where the Citizens are freed from the Tyranny of the Devil, from the Dominion of Sin,—and from the Power of Death

and Hell;—No Privileges of this World are to be compared with the Freedom, which they enjoy, in the sublime Abodes of their heavenly Father;—and what makes this City devoutly and seriously to be wished for, is, that it is a Situation unchangeable and eternal in its Continuance,—and seeing, we are convinced of this,—is it not very amazing, to see a World still walking contrary to the Light of their Reason, and madly gratifying those Indulgences of Sense, which lead immediately to inevitable Ruin? Yes, we often see Men of very good Sense, guilty of such unpardonable Errors,—Errors that make Reflection shudder, as it were, and shock and confound human Nature;—But how blameable must that Man be, who has Deepness of Understanding, and yet will not use it,—who laughs at the pious Resolutions of good Men,—and even dares to ridicule the Worship of God;—and where such Men are, I'm afraid, that they themselves may not be the only Ones injured; for they are dangerous Precedents in

a Neighbourhood,—and it is a just Observation, that “one bad Sheep may badly affect a whole Flock;”—So, if a bad Example in a Neighbourhood does no Mischief, it is well for the People.—Let us, then, as God has given us Power, let us use our Reason so, as not to abuse it;—nor suffer it to be corrupted by the false and deceitful Arguments of others, meant only to deceive and trap the Unwary.—Let our Aim be to please him only, who made us,—let our Pursuit be directed immediately to that Place, which holy David calls the Mountain of God's Holiness,—and here we shall be sure to lay hold on a Kingdom, which cannot be moved,—which is unchangeably fixt, and can no more fail, than the everlasting Founder of it can cease to exist.—Well then might the Apostle call it a City, that hath Foundations,—and particularly when we further observe, that it is Proof against the most violent Tempest of Wind, or the most rapid Torrent of Waters;—If then, such is the heavenly City, no

wonder from hence, if it is so firmly established, as not to fail.—Let us, therefore, look, and admire when we look, at the vast Difference between this World, and that which is to come. The Earth on which we sojourn, is a Stage of continual Changes and Revolutions; one Generation goeth and another cometh, and “the Fashion of it passeth away.”—Pray, what is become of those stately Cities, which were once impregnable, and the Admiration of the World?—Alas! their Beauty is gone, and their Magnificence is lost in ruinous Heaps.—Jerusalem was once the Glory of the World, but it is now totally demolished, and scarce one Stone is left upon another.—Hence, we may assure ourselves, that the very strongest earthly Buildings shall one Day yield to all conquering and victorious Time, and moulder into their primitive Dust.—They shall wax old and perish,—but the heavenly City shall never fail.—Why then do we still so eagerly hunt after the transient Enjoyments of this Life, which afford neither Peace to our

Minds, nor Satisfaction to our Souls?—Seeing we have a Prospect before us, where true and lasting Joys are only to be found,—let us not, therefore, through a careless Negligence forfeit our Claim to this Situation,—This World boasts of Nothing more than the Pleasure of an Hour, and the Sorrows of many Days;—and God, who created us, designed us to be eternally Happy.—Let not then this vile Earth be our Portion, when we may obtain Diadems of celestial Glory.—Pray what is it that Charms so much here?—Is it Wealth,—a large Circle of agreeable Companions,—or in gratifying the Sense.—These may please for a Time, but quickly fade like a Flower,—are as imperfect, as a Dream,—and vanish like a Shadow.—The most durable Wealth, therefore, must be sought for in Heaven;—The best Companions are to be met with above,—and no Pleasure is equal to that of a well spent Life, which is to be found only at God's right Hand for ever and ever.—Quit then all anxious Cares about earthly Things,

and set your Affections on Things above;—You may endeavour to live, but live honestly, and doubtless your Affairs will prosper;—but if you grasp at the World, so as to defraud others, and forget your God, it is no Wonder, neither is it a Pity, if your Substance wastes,—your Friends desert you,—and you die in Misery and Despair,—for is not he a Monster in Nature, and fit only to be despised, who robs the Poor of their Bread,—sees the Prosperity of his Neighbours with unnatural Envy, and through Pique or Prejudice, would ruin and laugh at the irrecoverable Downfall of an honest, religious, and well-meaning Man.—Let us then, in a Word, far different to this, let us make Life as easy as possible to Mankind in General,—“let us rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep;”—This is the true Way to that City, whose Builder and Maker is God,—and this is the Way to arrive at immortal Glory, Happiness, and eternal substantial Pleasure.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen



(No. 14.)

x 15th Chapter, 1st Epistle Corinthians, Verse 34th.

"Awake to Righteousness and Sin not."

In this Chapter we have a noble Discourse concerning the absolute necessity and certainty of rising from the Dead,—and because a Resurrection is clear beyond a Doubt, St. Paul very affectionately, in his Arguments, advises us, "not to be deceived," but in Time to "awake to Righteousness and Sin not,—This Doctrine he saw the great Necessity of arguing from the Ignorance and Depravity of Men's Lives,—for, says he, "some have not the Knowledge of God;—I speak this to your Shame;"—and which clearly, and at once sets aside that ridiculous Plea of those who found their Hope and Trust entirely on this Sentence, "let us eat and drink for Tomorrow we die;"—Arguing, that from hence it is substantially true and convincing, that here is our all, and that we ha

Nothing to fear, and hope for, but in this Life, and therefore let us, (say they) while we can, freely indulge ourselves, and give a loose to all the Pleasures and Enjoyments that court the Sense.—Indeed, if the Dead rise not,—if after this Life we cease to be,—certainly, under these Circumstances, a Life of Ease, Satisfaction, and Comfort, is much rather to be chose than Self-denial,—Suffering, or Affliction, even for Religion's Sake,—for if the Grave totally swallows up for ever our Existence,—so it must cut off every Expectation of future Rewards or Punishments.—But how absurd this Notion,—Let Men of Reason enquire to what End a Being of infinite Perfection, and eternal Government could form his Creatures?—Can they imagine it could be barely to amuse him, or assist him to kill Time?—This would immediately destroy the Godhead, and make him mutable,—frail as we are,—and consequently at some Period cease to be.—It seems, that to Men of such Discernment and Belief, St. Paul had been here discoursing,—

and therefore he in a clear Manner proves to the Corinthians the Certainty of a future State,—and hence carefully warns them “not to be deceived,”—adding, that “evil Communications corrupt good Manners.”—Therefore, he, like an affectionate Father to his Children, earnestly intreats them not to sin, but to awake to Righteousness:—An Exhortation that demands our most serious Animadversion, Reflection, and Esteem.—Because the Neglect of it may be extremely prejudicial both to ourselves and others.—In Order then to live up to the Rules of the Text,—and in the Manner St. Paul seems here to prescribe from the Words immediately preceding it,—“Evil Communications corrupt good Manners,”—Let us, as he wishes, be particularly careful how we convey our Thoughts and Sentiments to each other,—for, we may not always meet with Men of Discernment;—We may not always meet with Men of Candour,—and the former may miserably misconstrue a good Design to a bad Purpose, even hurtful to themselves,—a

the latter egregiously misuse it to your Disadvantage.—In the first Place then, how careful should we be in the Choice of our Company, and again how circumspect in our Words and Actions?—"Let no corrupt Communications proceed out of the Mouth," is a wise Observation, and a Maxim worthy the Attention, not only of the very Thoughtless, but of the most Virtuous,—for what is the End of profane Jesting, —obscene Expressions,—and immodest Conversation?—They pollute and defile the Mind,—corrupt the Understanding, Debauch the soundness of our Principles,—and infuse into the Heart unworthy and dishonourable Notions of God and Virtue.—And where can there be a more pestilential Contagion?—Where a Kahr that deals more Destruction round?—for, when our Morals are tainted and become unsound, —we generally bid adieu to every Thing that is honourable, amiable, or that dignifies the Name of frail human Nature, and thus leave neglected the plain Lessons of common Sense,

and the still plainer and better Dictates of sound Reason.—
But go into the Company of that Man, whose whole Delight
is in contriving Mischief to his fellow Creatures,—whose
Conversation breathes Nothing but Infamy and Excess,—and
who rejoices in Nothing more than in making Converts to his
own sinful and wicked Measures.—Go, I say, view him in
different Companies and Situations,—and see how in common
he is despised and detested:—The Good always shun him,—
and even the Bad will not always coincide with his extravagant
and vicious Folly,—and thus, he falls into perpetual Broils and
Quarrels,—his Life is one continued Scene of Disrespect,—
and he dies forsaken,—unlamented,—and without a Friend to
drop a Tear of Pity.—From which miserable State, let us turn
our Eyes upon the Good and Virtuous,—see what a Prospect
is here! all calm and serene,—here is no Deformity, his
Words are Virtue itself,—he wishes no ill,—but does all the
Good he actually can.—His Pleasure is to wipe off the

Widows' Tears, and soothe the Orphans' piercing Cries;—and thus he becomes courted by all, and envied by none;—and his Death is sincerely lamented,—deservedly pitied, and his Remembrance for ever imprinted on the Minds of those he has left behind.—A Life righteous like this is truly desirable, and devoutly to be wished for;—and it is what even imperfect Nature Dictates;—for we find in the Old Testament, that she discountenances every Thing that is abominable, filthy and base.—How strange then to find a World, taught from its Infancy to be good and virtuous:—How strange to find it still cherish that, which their Natures must abhor and detest.—Can it be owing to a Spirit of Contradiction? If it is, it must be either in Opposition to human Nature, or divine Wisdom:—If the former, it must be a Disposition founded entirely upon Ambition, the Destruction of every Thing that is amiable;—and if the Latter, it is still worse, and what none but an Atheist durst maintain;—for can there possibly

be a grosser, or a more unpardonable Affront offered to the divine Majesty of Heaven and Earth, than to quarrel with his Existence,—doubt his Providence,—or reprobate his Works, as unworthy infinite Perfection;—all which he, who opposes the Works of Nature, must do;—and 'tis well known, such immoral Discourses entirely destroy the natural End, and Use of Speech,—which was certainly given us to serve much nobler Purposes, than to scandalize or offend each other, and thus to abuse and traduce our Maker;—This noble, divine Faculty, is a very distinguished Privilege in the human Frame;—by which we can easily convey our Ideas of Reasoning to each other;—How shameful a Thing is it then, to pervert, and abuse such a Faculty in the Language of Profaneness and Vice?—How can we, nay, how dare we exercise it in Mischief?—Every one, who considers, must discover, that this excellent Gift of Speech, was bestowed upon us to advance his Glory, who
say;

gave it,—and at the same Time to promote, as much as possible, the Edification of each other;—but these Ends will never be answered, if our Tongues are chiefly exercised in impure and unhallowed Matters.—Thus we shall still sleep within the Curtain of Sin, and our Eyes continue dark in the fullen Confiner of Wickedness,—But St. Paul says, “Awake to Righteousness;”—which certainly is, when duly considered, a most affectionate, and in the End, a most profitable Admonition,—for “the Righteous shall go away into everlasting Happiness;”—pleasing reflection! to think,—nay, to be assured, that at the Close of a Life full of Misery and Trouble, a good Man shall begin an eternal Existence of complete and perfect Joy,—without Interruption, or the smallest Mixture of Impurity to embitter its Sweets;—Here is Nothing indecent, but all is sacred and sound.—Indeed 'tis impossible it should be otherwise, for God will not have any Thing to do with the wicked Man,—and therefore
non.

his Assembly is totally composed of the Good and Righteous;—
Let us then, my beloved, let us endeavour to merit and
obtain a Place in this distinguished and amiable Assembly.
—All must confess it a Situation most desirable, though
few are at the Pains to purchase it;—but though this may
be a Rule too general, yet I hope all here will be an
Exception to it, and Live, as becomes Men and Christians.
If we look back to our infant State, we will find, that we
enter the World blest with a native Simplicity and Innocence;
and, as soon as we become the least acquainted with our
heavenly Extraction, we find ourselves naturally inclined
rather to holy Practices, than bad and evil Deeds;—Then,
why interrupt this infant virtuous Inclination, in its original
pious Career?—We should consider how very susceptible Youth
is to every Impression, and therefore should never tempt it
above, what it is well able to bear.—On our first setting out, therefore,
we should be particularly careful in the Choice of our Company;

for on this one Thread generally hangs our future Conduct, and consequently our future eternal State of Happiness or Misery.—How many promising Youths have we seen for ever undone by an unhappy Connection at their first Introduction into Company?—How many, who have been the Pride and Hope of their Parents, by this, “ have brought down their grey Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave.”—The Poison of Libertinism never finds so Easy an Access to the Heart, as by bad Examples.—There are many Things we do, which Example and Custom have made tolerably Easy to us,—that Reflection tells us are neither Consonant with Conscience,—Equity,—or good Manners.—Let us not then, my beloved, “ follow a Multitude to do Evil;”—for it will be but little Consolation to us, to have Companions in the burning Lake,—it will be but little Comfort to us, to have Sharers of our Iniquity in the great and terrible Day of Accompts,—when all Hearts shall be laid

open, and all Secrets made known;—But let our Conversation always be upon useful and heavenly Things, even when Chance or Necessity throws us into strange, and wicked Company;—and thus we shall become Examples of Religion and Virtue;—be always happy within ourselves, and generally respected;—and such, indeed, as Christians, we are commanded to be.—May then our Light, as Christians, so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and hence glorify our Father, which is in Heaven;—May we, in the true Sense of the Words, thus “Awake to Righteousness and Sin not.”—May we always have a just and true Notion of God, and his Attributes, and never lose sight of his Kingdom and Glory.—May every Sentence that falls from our Lips, bespeak a Heart fraught with Piety, and true Christianity,—such as will tend to instruct and edify all that hear us.—Thus, we shall become happy Subjects to that great and wise Governor, who is the Spring

and Fountain of all real Bliss, — and thus, and thus only,
we shall become fit to enter into the Kingdom of Christ,
and qualified to hear the harmonious Choir of Angels, and at
the same Time, relish those grateful Sounds, which perpetually
echo Hallelujahs to the great and eternal King. — Now to
God the Father, &c. . Amen.

X.

(No. 15.) 15th Chapter, 1st Epistle Corinthians, Verse 33d.

" Be not deceived."

This is a wise Exhortation, and well worthy the Consideration of a Christian;—for if we look into the World, we may see, to our Sorrow, what Ravock the Want of a due Consideration, makes among Mankind.—We suffer ourselves to be preyed upon by a Self-Sufficiency, and thus, too confident in our own Merit, we are often miserably deceived.—Let us examine, therefore, upon what Pretensions Men are apt to judge upon their own Merit, and see, when thus examined, if they are not in many Instances much deceived, and found wanting in many essential Matters of their Duty;—and let us divide this Enquiry into worldly and religious Concerns:—Respecting the first, some are apt to think themselves better than they really are, on Account of their superior Wealth:—True, in Case it was acquired by laudable Means, and applied to benefici

Purposes, their Title in this Respect would be just.—But, if it is gained by Fraud and Extortion,—if it is abused to the Service of Covetousness,—Oppression, or Vanity,—or if withheld from those to whom Charity bids us impart it:—In this Case, the poorest Soul on Earth with an humble and honest Heart, will be found much richer in that, which is really valuable, than they,—for at last, he shall not be deceived,—he shall find that he has judiciously run the Race of the Righteous, which leads to everlasting Life:—If we wish then to do ourselves justice, and cast the Scales in our own Favour; we must endeavour after the innocent Acquisition of superior Knowledge,—for, the more we truly know, the more conscious will we still be, how imperfectly we comprehend Things, and how much there is left behind, of which we are still ignorant.—When St. Paul says, that Knowledge puffeth up, he means imaginary and misapplied Knowledge:—For he adds, “that if any Man thinketh that he knoweth any Thing,” i. e. completely,

—" he knoweth Nothing yet, as he ought to know."—And from such Expressions, Men of easy Minds become negligent and rash, and thus fall into perpetual Errors,—as to the Temptations to Pride, which prevail with the gay and thoughtless, it will be scarce proper to say more than to beg they would reflect, how precarious,—how light and trifling those Things are, which have so much of their Esteem.—How few have we ever seen much happier in the Possession of these, even in this World, beyond which, they cannot extend?—How many have been betrayed into an eternal, as well as temporal Ruin, by an injudicious Fondness of them?—To proportion, therefore, our Affections duly is an important Concern.—For want of which Multitudes are proud of their Vices, and even glory in their Shame.—Hence, we should examine, what Deductions are to be made from the Value of our Accomplishments and Advantages, on Account of our Deficiencies and Disadvantages:—For ~~till~~ we have balanced the one against the other,—we h

just as great a Chance to judge of our own Merit,—as to guess at our Wealth, by only casting up the Sums due to us, without stating what we owe,—and thus we are liable to many egregious Mistakes, and often miserably deceived,—we are generally content with present Pleasures, without looking at the final Event.—But, one vicious and mean Quality, if it does not totally eradicate, may yet obscure the Lustre of many Ornaments and amiable Virtues.—And, therefore, unless we search our Minds to the very Bottom, as it were, we shall, in Effect, know Nothing of ourselves.—But further,—there is another Direction, how to avoid being deceived, equally needful and advantageous,—which is, to be very cautious how we compare ourselves with others:—This is a Fault Mankind are too much addicted to,—if we appear to be any Way near as good as our Neighbours, we are content,—but this is a Notion that may greatly mislead and deceive us,—for our Neighbours may sometimes be very bad Precedents, and therefore a bad Standard

whereby to judge of our own Worth and Merit:—Consequently
modest, secret Merit,—Merit at Home is frequently the
greatest; and Qualifications, not so shining, may be as Bene-
ficial;—for modest Merit, on many Accounts, has the greatest
Claim to Acceptance.—As to comparing ourselves with others,
we may indeed find some, nay many, beneath us, who have
considerable Defects, which we have not—yet may be free from
equally as considerable ones, which we have.—But it would
be generally full as easy, if it were but half so pleasing to us,
to meet with many more greatly above us in these Respects.—
Now, if we make the Comparison only with such, as we
despise;—Consider, it is but a poor Pre-eminence to be superior
to the Despicable.—But even on Supposition we could main-
tain a Rank in our several Pretensions amongst the foremost
of Mankind, yet there remains another most material Point
to be considered.—What is Man, when laid in the Balance
of Truth?—On Examination, we shall find him, a poor.—

helpless,—short-lived Creature,—liable every Moment to lose every Thing that is valuable.—And why then is Dust and Ashes proud?—For, the little Preeminences, that we enjoy, are by no Means due to our own Merit; but owing to the Bounty, and held by the Pleasure of another.—All our natural Powers and Accomplishments are the Works of another;—The Gift of an infinite, eternal, and not a temporal Being;—By whose Providence all our outward Advantages are appointed,—and by whose Grace all our Improvements in Virtue and Goodness flow.—Who then hath made thee, vain Mortal, superior to thy fellow Creatures;—for what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?—And if thou didst receive it,—why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?—But know, imperious Man, that all thou possessest,—thou hast received,—and this too, not as a Gift to be used as Pleasure persuades;—but as a Trust only, to be disposed of according to the true Dictates of Virtue, Justice, and

Goodness,—for the Benefit of our fellow Creatures; and the Honor and Glory of our Creator; to whom it is not long, till we must render a just Account of our Stewardship;—and be it well known, that to him, to whom much is committed, much will be required,—and not one of us will be able to answer otherwise, than as in a greater or less Degree, we have used or abused those Talents, Providence has entrusted to our Care.—Which brings me to consider the Subject before us in Respect to religious Affairs, and the true State of our Souls.—This however disregarded by a thoughtless World, is the one Thing needful,—the ground Work of private and public,—of present and future Happiness.—Yet, perhaps, there is Nothing so likely, in which we are apt to deceive ourselves, as in Religion.—But upon calm Reflection, we shall see, that the great Account between God and ourselves, cannot be so easily settled.—It is an Affair in which, we may very possibly be mistaken, and these Mistakes must be attended

with very important Consequences,—If we think at all of this, we cannot but see its Weight and Seriousness, and that it includes every Thing interesting, reverent, and awful,—We must not, therefore, upon mere Profession, entertain too favourable Notions of our own Rectitude, Faith, and Obedience. To prevent this, and in Order that they might not be deceived, St. Paul frequently exhorted his new Converts to Sincerity and Self-examination,—thus, giving them a fair Opportunity to redress those inward, secret Grievances, which might lead them to depart from the living God;—It is for want of such a Conduct,—the Conduct of coolly reflecting to what End our Manner of Life will lead us, that we so often fall into Mistakes,—we think we may pass very well, if we pay as much Attention to the Duties of Religion, as the generality of those about us do, —without ever considering, that after St. Paul exhorts us not to be deceived, he immediately tells us that, " Evil Communications corrupt good Manners."—Yes, a bad Precedent is very

dangerous, and has been the Ruin of Millions, and it is too much to be feared will still be the Ruin of many more,—But certainly much of this might be prevented, would Christians only consider, what Privileges they enjoy,—Privileges, when improved, that will procure “a Treasure which waxeth not old, eternal in the Heavens;”—But unless such Improvements are made, as such Privileges demand, they will doubtless rise up in Judgment against us, and only aggravate our Guilt.—Miserable, therefore, is the Lot of him, who hath not gained the Protection of Heaven by his Obedience to its Laws,—he is an Out-cast from that Kingdom, where there is fulness of Joy,—he is destined to that Punishment, where there is Nothing but “weeping and gnashing of Teeth.”—Yet, how very seldom is it, that we make the Enquiry, whether this is not our Condition,—How seldom do we review the State of our Souls to see, whether they are not blind,—naked,—and ~~destitute~~ of heavenly Graces?—And when we do b

Chance enter upon this Examination,—how seldom are we just to ourselves.—Self-love,—an Affection inseparable from us, tempts us to be wonderfully easy of Belief in our own Favour,—makes us very slow to discern,—and is industrious to disguise, even to our own View, whatever tends to demonstrate to us our Deficiencies;—But a Case of such Importance as this, should not partially be determined,—A Matter of such Moment, as includes the Fate of an immortal Soul, should not so carelessly be decided,—We should not, therefore, be easy and negligent in Matters of Religion;—Let us not mingle with the World in its vain Pursuits of Profit and Pleasure;—Nor let us give up our Minds to a blind and thoughtless Security;—for, such a Conduct must one Day miserably deceive us.—To the pernicious Influence of bad Examples,—to the misgrounded Confidence in following the Multitude, may be imputed that great and visible Decay of Religion, which is the just Complaint of all serious and true Christians,—who

cannot but observe, that the indispensable Duties of God are remarkably neglected; and those precious Moments, which ought to be improved in suitable Acts of Piety and Devotion, are wantonly spent away upon the Gratification of our inward Corruptions, or through the Delusion of importuning Temptations. — Let us, from hence, then, my beloved, let us avoid, in Time, these Snares; before we stumble upon the dark Mountains of irreparable Destruction; — to prove our Virtue, let us compare our own Hearts and Lives with God's Commandments; — And being thus made sensible of our own Unworthiness, and how much we need his Mercy, — Let us submissively apply for it, as he prescribes, through the Merits of our blessed Redeemer; — For how ^{soon} perfect the Self-sufficient may appear in his own Eyes, — he will find that "his Heart is not right in the Sight of God." — "Be not then deceived," — but flee to the all-merciful Jesus, "from the Wrath to come;" — "acquaint yourselves with him and be at Peace." — They

who had once a Sense of Religion, but are fallen away,—
drawn aside by evil Example,—vicious Indulgences,—or
temporal Interests;—let them remember from whence they
are fallen;—repent and return to the Lord.—But indeed, a
Man must be miserably blind, who has considered our
holy Religion, and yet falls into very avoidable Mistakes;—
for here is sent from Heaven the Pardon of God for the Sins
of Men, and sealed with the Blood of its great and precious
Author,—the ever blessed Son of God;—who has reconciled
us to our offended Father, and conferred on us the Adoption
of Sons;—He has put us under the Direction of the holy
Scriptures, which is our fellow Labourer in the Works of God,—
and which confirms our Faith,—and makes our Repentance
available to the Remission of Sins;—And through this, if we
perform our Parts, as becometh Christians, we shall be received into
the everlasting Kingdom of God;—where all Deceit and Perfidy
shall lose their Names.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

x
(No. 16.)

18th Chapter St. Luke, Verse 19th.

"Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is God."

I shall not lose Time by explaining to you, particularly, the Cause of this Saying;—but refer you immediately to the Perusal of the Chapter, where I may justly say it is sufficiently explained,—for here, he that reads may easily understand:—I shall only, therefore, take Notice of the Humility of the Answer, and from hence endeavour to shew the unparalleled Goodness of God in its true and conspicuous Light.—Our Saviour well knew the Depravity of Men, and the Hypocrisy of their Hearts;—he well knew the Ruler's Mind, that, though he vouchsafed to call him good, yet believed him to be no more, than mere Man,—A common humane Teacher only;—he was perfectly convinced that in his Heart, he acknowledged neither the Divinity of his Nature, nor his

Godhead;—and therefore said, "why callest, &c. &c."—And was not this Humility unequalled? Was it not a Condescension beyond the wish of Expectation,—and out of the Reach of Thought?—Would Man set this Example before him,—where would be the Boasting of the Mighty,—the Arrogance of the Proud,—or the Aspiring of the Rich?—We would then behold our real selves, and, as it were through a Glass, see Mankind created, and designed for the common Help and Succour of each;—and at the same Time discover the Truth of the Text,—that Goodness is the sole and peculiar Prerogative of God, and what renders the Deity most amiable and lovely.—This is a Truth which was very discoverable by the Light of Nature only, for according to Tully:—The Heathens themselves were sensible of it:—They declared, "That of all the Perfections of the Deity, that of Goodness was most proper for him, who was an universal Benefactor to all Mankind;—who gave all Things to others; but received Nothing from

them:—"But further,—if we have recourse to divine Revelation, we will find this still more evident,—for there we are told, that "the Lord is gracious, and merciful,—long suffering and abundant in Goodness."—He then that acknowledges a God, must own him a Being possessed of all imaginary Perfections, and that Goodness is his most essential Attribute:—If he was not a Being of pleasing Contemplation and Hope,—he would then doubtless only become an Object of Terror,—and we should then serve him rather through Fear than Love;—and hence, it would be less criminal to say, there is no God, than to believe his Existence, and to say, or think, he is not good.—This would be attributing to God, a despotic, arbitrary,—cruel Sovereignty.—an Idea which human Nature would recoil at,—for what else would infinite Wisdom be without Goodness; but Subtilty and Craft to do Mischief?—What else were infinite Power,—but an irresistible Ability to destroy?—Mere Will and Humour are fickle unchangeable Things;—but Truth

and Goodness are steady fixed Principles, and a solid Foundation for our Trust and Hope.—But why should I endeavour to prove to a Christian Congregation, what even Infidels must confess,—let it be granted them that God is a Being of unequalled Goodness:—Nay, it must be so, if we consider that from him Mankind derive the true Spirit of Benevolence,—and that God is the Cause of all created Goodness.—And if so, he must be the most perfect of all Beings,—for as we are but secondary, our Goodness must be imperfect,—'tis impossible that the Effect should equal the Cause in Virtue.—Can the River contest with the Fountain for Clearness? Can the Air vie with the Sun in Brightness, from which it borrows its Splendour? Or is the Swiftness of a Ship to be compared to that of the Wind, which drives it?—Then as God is originally and primarily Good, he must consequently exceed all his Creatures, who can boast of Nothing at best, but a created Goodness.—Let a Man's Virtue be ever so conspicuous,—let his En-

deavours after Goodness be ever so ardent,—yet it bears but a faint Resemblance of that of Heaven:—For we have all gone astray,—we have all fallen vastly short of Perfection; and hence there is none among us to be called good, no not one.—Tis a melancholy Reflection; and as true as melancholy;—Our Nature is suffered to become corrupt,—and we are generally more ready to do Evil, than Good.—If we only took into the World and view the Actions of Men, we will see the greatest Part of it committing Sin,—and too many even rejoicing in their Wickedness:—True, the very best of Men have not always stood upright, nor is it to be wondered, considering the many and great Temptations, that we are daily exposed to,—yet what is greatly to be lamented is, that Men are scarce half so good as they might be.—The Angels indeed themselves have been accused of Folly;—yet, this argues no Reason, why Men should wilfully sin.—No,—God requires all ~~his~~ ^{his} Creatures to be as good as possibly their Natures will

allow,—and therefore a Man must be a wicked Offender,
who errs, because others have done likewise,—or who sins
merely because, he has a merciful Master to deal with:—But
let such consider, that though God is merciful, yet he is severe,
and will judge righteously.—Let Men then do the best they
can at all Times;—let them live, as if To-morrow was their
last, and still, I doubt not, they will find they come far short
of their Duty:—If any of us want Encouragement to persevere
in Goodness and the Love of God:—let us cast an Eye upon
that of God to us;—observe the Creation of the World:—If
it had not been merely through his Goodness, he certainly never
would have given it a Being; for infinite Perfection must have
been from all Eternity infinitely happy in himself, and conse-
quently could have no Need of us to perfect that, which was
already perfect,—from hence, then, let us take a View of the
Redemption after an almost irretrievable Fall, and compare
it with the Creation.—Though God was almost incomparable

in his Goodness, as to the Creation of the World,—yet how much did he excel this in the Redemption of it.—Here we may contemplate, and be lost in Admiration,—Indeed, his Love and Goodness was very conspicuous in the extraordinary Frame of Man, in furnishing him with such a Variety of useful Faculties in Regard to the Body, and such noble Endowments with Respect to the Soul, and not only in this, but in giving him Dominion over all his Creatures, and making him, but a little lower than the Angels,—and still, if possible, to elevate his extensive Kindness, how Liberal has he been in providing for our Necessities and supplying all our Wants?—Boundless, incomprehensive Goodness!—One would imagine, that this was beyond all Idea and Expectation,—but mark, his Goodness was still more extensive,—how did he lighten our Darkness? How did he support us, and lift us up after a dangerous Fall, even at the Expence, the enormous Price of the Blood of his only and precious Son?—

What Mercy, what Goodness is here displayed to a perverse and sinful World?—Well may we, on such an Occasion, use the pathetic Words of the Psalmist, and say,—“ Lord, what was Man! lost Man! that thou shouldst thus Regard him, and be so Mindful of him?”—And must not our Hearts glow with Admiration and Love of the Godhead, when we consider, that this was out of pure Love to sinful Man,—who had affronted him in the worst Manner, and even dared to live in open Rebellion against him;—Yes, we had provoked him with the most daring,—flagrant,—and presumptuous Arrogance,—by defying his Justice, and by entertaining a scandalous and a most injurious Correspondence with his open Enemy—the Devil.—From hence, how could we entertain the least Hopes of Redemption?—And yet, notwithstanding all this,—when there was no Intercessor,—when none durst appear for us,—he saved us for his Mercy’s Sake.—How Wonderful to tell, he even spared not himself in his Son, i. e.

he disdained not, for our Sakes, to take upon him a Body of Clay,—to come and dwell among us,—and instruct us in Righteousness;—nor did he scruple, after all, to shed his innocent Blood, to expiate wicked Sinners, who lay in Darkness, and the Shadow of Death, from eternal, deserved Punishment;—And again, when our blessed Lord and Saviour was taken from us by our Cruelty, we even then were not left destitute,—he failed not immediately to send the Holy Ghost to comfort us,—to illuminate us with divine Grace,—and to guide us into the Path of Truth;—Nay, in every Part of our Redemption, a wonderful Condescension appeared in the Son of God;—and how great, as well as strange, was the Reconciliation of his Mercy and Justice,—and particularly in Respect to the latter;—for, notwithstanding our ill Deserts, here is a full Assurance of everlasting Salvation to lost and miserable Man.—What then can possibly excel this,—this boundless,—this match

Affection;—This towers above all human Idea, and far exceeds even the Wonders of the Creation;—The Creation was effected by the Word of God;—he spake, and all was done.—But for our Redemption, more, much more was required.—The Perverseness of sinful, stubborn Man, could not be retrieved without Blood-shed, and that too of no less a Personage, than God's only begotten Son;—dreadful Thought!—The Soul that has any Feelings must recoil at the Idea;—must shudder at the Cruelty of the Aggressors;—and again be lost in a still Calm of Pity, for suffering Innocence upon an ignominious Tree;—Thus our Saviour died for ungrateful, wicked Man.—Let us then, one towards another, endeavour, as much as possible, to copy his Example;—As he taught us;—let us qualify ourselves and diligently teach others;—and as Providence still supports us;—let us of our Abundance spare a Little to the Comfort of the Needy;—the Helpless;—and oppressed;—We all know our Duty, and therefore, it cannot

be hard to practice, what we know;—If we look at the Goodness of God, we will see him extend his Care over all his Works,—and particularly over his Church (this Nation has Reason to acknowledge) he presides with a watchful and active Providence.—The Consideration then of having so merciful, —so gracious a Protector, must doubtless give us the greatest Satisfaction.—A Being so indulgent to address,—so able to give,—and so inclinable to hear our Prayer, must be of infinite Consolation to the Lover of Virtue, in the Hour of Affliction;—for the Prophet tells us, “ that the Lord is good in the Day of Trouble, and a strong Hold in the Day of Danger; ”—and give me Leave to add, that Nothing can prevent the Mercy of God, but our Sins.—Let us, therefore, truly turn to God, and forsake Vice, and he will be a Refuge in our Distress.—Let the Goodness of God be ever in our Thoughts and Meditations,—Let us reflect on all the Instances of his Love towards us,—

he created and preserves us,—how he redeemed us from Sin and Misery,—how he supplies us with his Grace, to assist us in our Duty,—and how he has promised eternal Happiness, as a Reward to our Obedience.—What shall we render unto the Lord for all these Benefits?—We must exclaim with holy David, and say, “ Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name; for thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, Honor, and Power;”—and in a Word, let us conclude with St. Paul, “ Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us; unto him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus.— To whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, &c. Amen.

7
(No. 17.) 13th Chapter John, Verse 35th.

"By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples,
if ye have love one to another."

Formerly the greatest Promoters of Virtue and Morality had a particular Pride, and Vanity in having their Memories perpetuated, and Reputations secured by some signal Mark of Distinction, in order that they might seem to be beloved among Men, and thereby win over others to embrace their Doctrines, Schemes, and Opinions,—and these Methods were productive of strong Contentions,—Divisions,—and Oppositions amongst the different Sects and Parties of that Period.—Every School had its peculiar Principle and Mode of Conduct to be subscribed to, as a Discovery, under whose Banners the Subscribers were enlisted, and what Doctrines they were determined to propagate and maintain.—And thus, in the Gospel History, we find the same Schemes p¹¹

attended to.—Thus the Pharisees to signalize, and make more powerful their Interest, exacted of their Followers a Singularity of Habit, and a sanctified Separation from other Men:—The Followers of John the Baptist were also remarkably eminent for the Austerity, and severe Mortification of their Lives.—But our Saviour being engaged in a still more noble Exercise, for the eternal Benefit of the Soul, takes a very different Method, more easy, and of free Will.—He orders his Followers not to seek after the empty Praise of Men, by outward and vain glorious Marks of Distinction, but to signalize themselves by doing Good, and having a pure Love one towards another:—"By this," says he, "shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples."—Hence it appears, that Love is the grand Characteristic of a true Christian Profession, and the Centre to which Christianity aims,—without Love, therefore, is nothing in us, we are utterly dead to Christ,—we are no more his Disciples;—and when this is effected,

even natural Reason tells us, we are divested of all those noble Feelings that grace the human Mind, and distinguish us from the Brutes that perish.—I will venture, therefore, to affirm that Love is the darling Precept of the Gospel, and the Foundation of all true Religion;—for if we love one another, —we shall thereby, in its fullest Extent, fulfil both the Law and the Gospel.—Charity is what they both warmly recommend, and therefore if we believe that these are of divine Authority, we must practise it,—else we cease to have Faith in a Redeemer, and at once to be Christians:—But as I am well convinced that none here dispute the Reality of a crucified Saviour:—I shall beg Leave to remind you, that, according to his Doctrine, it is our Duty to be kind and affectionate one towards another,—including all Ranks and Degrees, all Sects and Nations;—whether Jews or Greeks,—whether Friends or Relations,—Strangers or Enemies;—These, in a Degree, have all a Right to our Esteem and Bounty,—our Generosity and

Favour,—and which we cannot possibly hold from them, unless we shamefully deny the great Law of our most excellent and incomparable Religion.—Do we consider?—Are we Men subject to one common Father? Don't all the Blessings we enjoy spring from him? Are we any more but Pilgrims here in a State of Probation? And is it not expressly said that where much is given,—much will be required?—If all this is true,—how hardly will many rich Men enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?—Let us then, as long as Life and Abilities last,—let us deal our Kindnesses judiciously to the Relief of the Necessities of others,—though an Adversary, and in the Rank of our bitterest Enemies,—for be ye well assured this is no more than our real and incumbent Duty,—and what Revelation and Reason both command,—and, indeed, can there be a greater Happiness upon Earth to a Mind that can ruminate, and look back upon itself with Pleasure and Satisfaction?—Was it not, think you, the most solid Comfort to the good Samaritan,

who, when he had found a Jew left half dead by cruel and murdering Thieves, bound up his Wounds and ordered him to be taken particular Care of:—It must be so,—human Nature is of such a Composition, that if it thinks at all, it must be pleased and happy under a Reflection of having done good;—and, on the other Hand, when we receive a Benefit, and particularly from a Stranger, we are still equally charmed.—This is clearly evident from the obliging Behaviour of our Saviour to a Woman of Samaria;—he, to try her Disposition, and to shew an Example of brotherly Love, which ought to reign in common among Men, asks of her a Cup of Water;—she surprized at this unexpected Condescension, asks in confusion, “how it happened that he, being a Jew, begged Drink of her, being a Woman of Samaria, for the Jews had no Dealings with the Samaritans?”—He answered and said, “If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is that speaks to thee, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living Water;”—and he

immediately gave her a Detail of all that ever she had done, and other Circumstances, which so amazed her, that she immediately owned him the Messiah,---told it in the City,---brought over many Disciples,---and ever after owned the Propriety of a mutual Love, that one Nation, or Sect, ought necessarily to have towards another:---From thence we learn, that all Mankind are our Neighbours and Brethren, and therefore all Men overburthened with Troubles and Calamities have a very just Claim to our Assistance and good Offices, though a Stranger,---an Alien,---a Friend,---or an Enemy:---If we only set before us that golden Rule, to do by others, as we would have others do by us, we shall soon and evidently discover the Propriety of all this;---We shall clearly see that to despise any Man, because he is not of our Religion or Nation, is a very ridiculous Folly, and discovers a Weakness that human Nature should blush to own.---As to our Friends, Nature alone will extort our Respect, and link our Affections

to them;—and when we do this only, what is it more than what the Publicans and Sinners did? Those who loved them, they also loved;—But what was their Reward? Even Nothing. —Hence we, who do a Benefit merely for the Sake of private Interest, can expect no better Reward than that, which shall inevitably fall to the Ground and be for ever lost.—Do we wish then to be called the Disciples of Christ? I doubt not every one wishes for the Appellation, but let me ask, who deserves it? Even those, and those only, who unfeignedly love one another, and express it at every Opportunity, and on all Occasions,—For we must Pity those in Distress,—prudently admonish them,—be tender in Respect to their Characters,—and endeavour to wipe off every Stain that may seem unjustly to fall upon it,—We must be slow to Anger, and ready to forgive an Injury;—And those, who do less, know Nothing of Christian Charity, and the Love we owe to each other, as fellow Men and Christians;—for St. Paul tells us, “that Charity

doth not behave itself unseemly,—seeketh not her own,—is not easily provoked,—thinketh no Evil,—rejoiceth not in Iniquity;—but rejoiceth in the Truth,—beareth all Things,—believeth all Things,—hopeth all Things,—endureth all Things.”—How amiable then is brotherly Love, and how reasonable, when we consider, that it was the express Command of Christ, and all he required of his Followers, as the Foundation of every other Grace,—and it certainly was no less,—for the Love that he preached was pure and unspotted, comprehended the whole Race of Mankind, and extended itself to the utmost Boundaries of the universal Globe;—and hence, every Creature that bears the Image of God, is certainly the Object of Christian Love;—Nay, in a good Man, it reaches still farther, for he is merciful, even to his Beast;—But further, in the Words immediately preceding the Text, our Saviour thus exhorts us, “to love one another, as he loved us.”—Now this is Love indeed without any Rival;—for we all know, that he so loved us, that he

willingly laid down his Life, as a Ransom for sinful Man.
—shewing that we should likewise, at least, risque our Lives
for one another.—How amiable a Virtue then is that, in that
Man, who, when another reviles him, reviles not again, but
does good to those that curse him, and even prays for them
that hate, persecute, and despitefully use him;—And this
Duty is still further, and more forcibly urged by God
himself;—For let me ask, is there any one existing innocent,
and meritorious enough, really to deserve the Benefits he
receives of God's overruling Providence?—And yet do not
we amply partake, and bountifully experience them?—Do
not we daily add many grievous Trespasses to our natural
Unworthiness;—and yet does he not still give us liberally,
and upbraideth not? Yes, without any Stain upon his
Holiness, he, like a most tender Parent, without partiality
to his Children, causes his Sun to rise on the Evil and the
Good; and sendeth his Rain equally upon the Just and Unjust;

—And to crown all, he sent his Son into the World to save Sinners,—who was so illustrious a Pattern of Love to Mankind, that as he enjoined it above all other Things, so he practised it in the highest Perfection,—he offered himself a Victim and a Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World,—he presented us with the best of Laws for the Reformation of our Lives and Manners,—he revealed the brightest Discoveries of Eternity, and gave us the best Encouragements to seek it; he pitied the Ignorance, forgave the Malice and Rashness of his Persecutors and Destroyers, and prayed earnestly for their Conversion and Acceptation at the Throne of Grace.—Let me beg of you, then, my beloved, as you Value an Eternity of Happiness or Misery, let me beg of you seriously to peruse those sacred Pages of the Gospel, and there, carefully examine the Life, Death, and Sufferings of our blessed Lord, and, as much as possible, imitate him;—Let his Conduct be our Example, and his Precepts our constant Guide;—and then,

and not till then, we shall live as becometh us, and be what God requires.—In my Opinion, it is an easy, very easy Task imposed upon us, to love one another; and how reasonable, when we reflect that it is the sole Promoter of Peace and Tranquillity, and keeps us ever at Ease and Quiet?—In this Situation our Repose is undisturbed, and we only rise each returning Day to give fresh Instances of Goodness to a depraved and perverse Generation,—Thus Earth would become a very near Resemblance of those blessed Regions, where Nothing exists but united Hearts, and conjoined Affections;—And by such a Conduct, and such an exact Imitation (which ought to be our chief Pride) of our glorious Redeemer, shall all Men know that we are Christ's Disciples, and simply because we so far condescend to that indispensibly necessary Duty, as to love one ~~one~~ another.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

X

(No. 18.) 2d Chapter Zephaniah, Verse 3d.

"Seek Righteousness, seek Meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the Day of the Lord's Anger."

A pleasing and a profitable Admonition,—pleasing, because it will free us from the Anger of the Lord, and profitable, because Righteousness and Meekness will infallibly introduce us into everlasting Happiness:—To let this Admonition have its just Tendency, and due Force therefore,—let us begin at the Source of our Transgressions,—and thus endeavour, by checking these, to become, as it were, new Men, and gain the End of our Salvation.—Pride was the Passion through which Sin and Misery entered into the World; and consequently, when our Saviour began our Restoration, he first touched upon that Point where he knew we had failed; for says he, "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart; and ye shall find rest unto your Souls."—And to accomplish

this valuable Purpose, his first public Address from the Mount was a Declaration of Blessedness to the Poor in Spirit,—of Blessedness to the Meek,—and of Blessedness to those, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness,—for they shall be filled. —And what Arguments can be applied to the Heart of Man, of greater Weight and Force?—What more persuasive, and better accommodated to Christians, than the Precepts and Example of so great,—so good,—and yet so humble a Master?—For 'tis impossible, notwithstanding the Pride in the World, but the Example, and particularly the Contemplation of such a Character, must have some Impression upon the Minds even of the worst of Men,—and certainly, in a great Measure, check and discourage their growing Vices.—The Life of our Redeemer was a constant Lesson of Meekness and Righteousness,—and in every Instance of it shewed, that he came not to share the Pride and Glories of Life, or to swell the Hopes of ambitious Followers,—but to cast a Damp upon them, by himself

appearing rather as a Servant than a Master;—coming, as he always declared, “not to be ministered unto, but to minister;” and, as the Prophet describes his Appearance, he came without either that Form, Comeliness or Beauty, as they, in their ambitious Views, fully expected;—Nay, the voluntary Meanness of his Birth,—the Poverty of his Life,—the low Offices in which it was engaged, and the Inconveniences which attended it, all spoke the same Language:—Mark with what Meekness he conducted himself under the repeated Provocations of a thankless People:—But what raises this his Character to its most exalted Pitch, is the tender and endearing Proof he gave of the same Disposition at the Conclusion, and dreadful Catastrophe of his Suffering;—for he humbled himself even to the Death of the Cross,—the Death of a Slave,—and a Mulefactor. He was dragged to Calvary without Opposition, ~~insulted~~ without Complaint.—As then Humility

shines in the Character of Christ, so does it equally in his Religion, the Spirit of which tends all the same Way; for Christianity rightly understood and practised, is all Meekness and Candour,—Love and Courtesy,—and there is no one Passion our Saviour rebukes so often, or with such Severity, as that which is subversive of those Effects,—and this Passion is doubtless Pride, which in Proportion as it governs, infallibly leads us to a discourteous Treatment of others.—Thus then both the Religion and Example of Christ teach us to be righteous and meek, and hence to escape the pursuing Vengeance of the Lord, and thereby “find rest unto our Souls;”—Rest from those turbulent and haughty Passions which disturb and disorder our Peace:—Rest from the Provocations and Disappointments of the World, and a Train of untold Evils too long to be recounted,—If we reflect on what we have seen or felt, we will find that a great Part of the Uneasinesses, which take up and torment our Thoughts, owe their rise to Nothing else but

a Disposition opposite to a Temper of Meekness.—With Regard to the Provocations and Offences, which are unavoidably happening to a Man in his Intercourse with the World, we may lay it down as a general Rule, that in Proportion as a Man's Pride increases so does his Provocation and Displeasure:—As the Opinion of himself rises, so does the Injury; and so does his Resentment.—'Tis this that gives Edge to the Instrument which wounds him, and excites that Heat in the Wound, which renders it incurable.—But the Case is very different with the Meek and Lowly,—One Half of these painful Conflicts, he actually escapes, and the other Part falls lightly upon him;—He provokes no Man by contempt.—He is the Mark of no ones Envy; so that he cuts off the first fretful Occasions of the greatest Part of these Evils,—and if any Thing is likely to hurt him unavoidably, he mildly receives it,—just like the humble Shrub in the Valley, which gently bends, and scarce feels any Injury from those stormy E

counters, which rend even the proud Cedar, and tear the very Oak up by the Roots:—If we consider Pride, with Regard to the many Disappointments of this Life, which arise from the Hopes of bettering our Condition, the Reasoning is still the same.—What we expect is ever in Proportion to the Estimate made of ourselves,—for when Pride and Self-love have brought us in their Accounts, we find that we are worthy of all Honours,—and fit for all Places and Employments,—consequently as our Expectations rise and multiply,—so must our Disappointments also;—and these united are very sufficient to make and keep us miserable,—and in Truth there is Nothing so common in Life, as to see Thousands, whom you would say had all the Reason in the World to be at rest, so vexed with Sorrows of this Kind, and so incessantly tortured with the Disappointments which their Pride and Passions have created;—for though they appear to have all the Ingredients of Happiness, yet they neither can compound or use them.—Their

presumptuous Notions so hurry them on from one Expectation to another, as to leave them no rest Day or Night,—But would we consider, Confidence in ourselves leaves no Mark of Ability, but Weakness and Ignorance.—If we were but humbler, we should be much safer,—for Humility and Meekness, will infallibly draw a Veil over God's Displeasure,—and teach us to seek Righteousness and eschew Evil.—Would we then wish for Safety?—Then let us be content,—for discontent brings People into Mischiefs innumerable,—It is in itself a very painful State,—preys upon the Spirits,—deadens the Sense of every Enjoyment in Life,—sours the Temper,—and thus produces great Wickedness, as well as Misery,—A Displeasure with themselves and their Conditions, often tempts Men to better it unlawfully,—by Force and Fraud;—Many are the Instances we have of this abominable Kind,—and dreadful must that Uneasiness be, that can drive Men to a Method of Relief so evidently Criminal;—

Let a Man's Circumstances be what they will, he has no Excuse to attempt to better them dishonestly,—If I am poor and uneasy,—is another Man's Property and Quiet to suffer to make me easy?—By no Means,—and yet what dreadful Havock is there often made from no better Motive,—Kings and Princes ravage Nations, murder and distress Millions,—the Powerful and Wealthy of a lower Degree, oppress and injure their fellow Creatures, and often, merely to gain Advantages, to which, perhaps, they are by no Means entitled,—And in lower Life still, what Numbers are there, who often disturb their Neighbours to a vast Extent,—put Things into a Ferment all around them,—and this merely to carry some Point, which they ought not to carry,—and perhaps only to grieve some innocent Object of their Resentment,—so baneful is the Spirit of Discontent.—Again, I doubt not, we all allow, that grieving for Things we cannot possess, is very blameable, and will allodge,

we are not guilty of it.——But let me ask, are not we all ready to claim Equality with others, and particularly in Point of Understanding, and plead that no one therefore is entitled to Pre-eminence over us?——To see ourselves outdone here, we cannot bear; But let us consider, that where our Envy is grounded, perhaps on Examination, we have Reason to pity.——Alas! we know not, how little Delight those above us may enjoy from all their seeming Advantages; and how dearly they may pay for what we imagine a principal Part of their Happiness;——For generally there are great Deductions to be made from all Appearances of Prosperity among Men, and often they, whose outward Show is most admired, are the most wretched within;——Though there are some Things, we would wish to change with others;——Yet there are none with whom, we would make an entire Change,——as to Person,——Age,——Temper,——Health,——Situation,——Employment,——Connections,——Vexations,——Hazards,——and Circumstances.——If then, we could not put up with all these, we

are we discontent with our own Condition?—For it is certainly very unreasonable to desire, to chose out only what we like, and unite that alone in ourselves;—Meekness, therefore, recommends itself as a Security against those Heart-akes, which, though ridiculous Sometimes in the Eye of the Beholder, yet are serious enough to the Man, who suffers them;—He, who is little then in his own Eyes,—is little too in his Desires; Nothing disappoints him, for let him lose all his Pursuits here, yet his Happiness and Peace of Mind do not suffer,—and when such a Character is cast down, would not any one of common Humanity, stretch out a helping Hand to raise him up?—And if Meekness has Advantages where we should least expect them, who would not study to be meek,—particularly, on a second Consideration, that the humble Man gets what the Proud must never hope for (viz.) " Rest unto his Soul,"—the certain Reward of a righteous Man.

Let a Man, therefore, seek Meekness, and he will

find Righteousness, and thus he shall be hid in the Day of the Lord's Anger;—If in many Respects the World goes untoward with the humble Man, yet he knows a Truth, which the Proud will never acknowledge, that the World was not made for him;—And therefore, let him share ever so little of its Advantages, yet he is still happy,—knowing how little it is, that a Creature compounded of Sin,—of Ignorance,—and Frailty, has a Right to expect;—A Soul thus turned and resigned is carried smoothly down the Tide of Life;—Few Temptations disturb his Passage,—few Dangers alarm him.—Though exposed to all the Changes and Chances of others, yet by seeing the Justice of what happens, and humbly yielding to the Stroke of Fate, he feels the Smart of frowning Fortune with Composure;—And as the Laws of Nature fulfil the Intention of their wise Creator, so is he content to act the Part assigned him without a Murmur;—Hence, we may conclude, that Meekness, the Basis of all this, is a

most powerful Recommendation to the divine Favour,—For we are assured by the Word of Truth, "that God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble."—And certain it is, if we can believe plain natural Reason, that Nothing tends more either to the Peace or Prosperity of the Public,—or the Happiness of Individuals, than this amiable Disposition of Meekness,—Nothing is more favourable and friendly to Society,—or to the Order, and good Government of the World,—And hence, if we thus seek Righteousness and Meekness, we shall certainly escape the Anger of the Lord, and in return find "Rest unto our Souls;"—Which that we may all do, God grant through Jesus Christ our Lord.—To whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be ascribed. &c. Amen.

(No. 19.) 4th Chapter Mark, Verse 24th.

X "Take heed what you hear."

This is a Caution of the highest Moment,—and ought to make a very deep Impression on the Heart,—for many Reasons,—but particularly, because it was recommended by our Saviour himself.—In the first Place he observes,—"he that hath Ears to hear, let him hear;"—and immediately follows the Caution of the Text,—but "Take heed what you hear."—i. e. Men should make a proper Use of what they hear, in all Places and at all Times,—but especially where they are assembled on religious Affairs,—to improve the Morals, and enlighten the Understanding,—and, when we repair to a Church, we certainly should do it for Instruction, and that of the most weighty Concern:—Here we are assembled before an Almighty Judge, who not only sees what we do,—hears what we say,—but at the same Time knows the Secrets of it

Heart, and what it aims at.—Let a Man then consider this, his real Situation,—and say, can he,—dare he,—behave improperly, and as it by no Means becomes a Christian.—Upon such a Consideration, I am persuaded the most determined Sinner would cautiously hear, and improve the Word of God:—His Thoughts,—Words,—and Actions would then tend the right Way, and terminate in the most substantial Love of that immaculate Lamb,—whose Blood washed away the Sins of all true Believers.—But 'tis to be feared, may we have too much Ground to assure ourselves,—that there are many in the World, who regularly attend divine Service, and upon whose Lives Religion has no visible Influence.—The Reason is obvious,—Few are so very wicked as to think of living totally free from the Marks of Religion.—They know there is a God that governs all, and whose Justice is infinite, and therefore they wish in some Measure to serve him.—I shall endeavour, therefore, in the following Discourse, to shew how we ought

to hear and receive the Word of God,—and give some Directions for the Performance of this Duty, that it may be of Use and Benefit to the Hearers.—The great End of hearing the Word of God is certainly to form and regulate our Manners.—This is what our Saviour strongly urges in his admirable Sermon on the Mount,—and to impress it on the Minds of the Hearers, he concludes with this Reflection,—“ Every one that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened to a foolish Man, that built his House on the Sand; and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House; and it fell, and great was the Fall thereof.”—Shewing, that he has laid down an infallible Rule for Man, which if he neglects to follow, he must inevitably fall to Destruction:—and who in his right Sense and Reason would leave it, when he considers that it is the pleasiest Tract Man can pursue?—Let the Libertine give loose to his Pleasures,—let him swim down the Tide

Folly and Intemperance,—and let him compare his phantom Delights with those Pleasures, which Men of a more noble and refined Way of thinking enjoy, when they contemplate on Virtue in her naked and genuine Simplicity;—and let him then pronounce from which Source spring the most substantial and solid Joys.—The one in its most exalted State is embittered with many Sours,—while the other is free from all impure Mixtures,—and this Life only Ends to renew it in a still more pure and refined Enjoyment.—A State truly desirable,—and what every good and well-disposed Mind must covet to possess,—and to possess it a good Mind will find little Difficulty in the Attempt.—For the Attainment is already half accomplished, and he needs only continue in the Race, he at present is running.—True, for this Purpose, it is every one's Duty to acquaint themselves with the Principles of Religion both natural and revealed,—without now what to practice, upon what Motives,—and to what

End;—we can practise Nothing as we ought:—But, if after we know our Duty, and our Knowledge does not animate our Zeal;—if while we have the Light, we walk not “as Children of Light,”—this will in a greater Measure enflame our Account, and render us Self-condemned upon stronger and more notorious Convictions.—These are Truths which Christians ought often to be reminded of, as they tend very much to the Salvation of the Soul.—But, indeed, who does not know this;—who does not know that Obedience to the Gospel, is every Thing necessary to Salvation,—who does not know that “without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord, and that Jesus Christ is the eternal Salvation to those only that obey him:”—Every one almost knows this,—but we may with Shame observe that very few practise what they know.—Our Faith is generally good,—but our Works are too often in Opposition to it.—Yes,—the Confession and Conduct of Christians very seldom bear any visible degree of Conformity:

—And why?—Men in this corrupt State do not always act upon Principle:—Their Interests will prevail, even in spite of Justice, and their Attachments to this World are often so powerful, as to make them rebel against the Law of their Minds, and carry them against the clearest Light and Conviction of it.—Many are the Men, I doubt not, of this Stamp, that have fallen under your own Observations;—Men too, who firmly believe in the Gospel of Christ, and acknowledge it with St. Paul, “the Power of God unto Salvation.”—But he can be reckoned little more than a Madman, who thus dishonestly will fly in the Face of Justice to gratify a poor,—Self-interested Principle, that can at best but satisfy, as it were, for a Moment.—If Conscience ever prevails,—he cannot, I should think, escape both unhappy Days and sleepless Nights.—Conscience makes Cowards of us all,—and we cannot reflect on a Breach of Conduct without Misery. Let Men, therefore, first “take heed what they hear,”—

and they will naturally take heed what they do.—A Minister of Christ, in the Discharge of his pastoral Office, should be very careful and diligent in preaching the Word of God, and shewing the Way to Salvation,—And the Hearers of God's Word, should be as particularly careful to observe and retain what they hear,—else, their repairing to Church, or to any other religious Sanctuary will be to little or no Purpose,—We should not come here with Arrogance to criticise upon, but to receive the Words of the Preacher as they are meant.—St. Paul, though a most eloquent Man, may in many Parts be variously construed, both to a good and a bad Purpose; and those, who wish not clearly to understand him, often from this slender Licence, make a very bad Use of his real Intentions:—The Reason is, they are barely willing to acknowledge the Commandments of God, as reasonable;—but cannot think of practising any one in its full Extent;—however, this does not forbid a Preacher, to continue in

explaining the Articles of Faith, and especially in Case of any dangerous and prevailing Errors or Heresies;—nay, it is his indispensable Duty, because a Neglect of it may hazard the Good in falling from their present Perfection, and there can be little Hopes of ever (without it) retrieving the Bad.—Is it then the Duty of Preachers to inculcate the Necessity of Holiness?—Then it must be the indispensable Duty of Hearers to regard well their holy Instructions,—and if they would not deceive themselves in an Affair of the highest, and most serious Consequence,—let them resolve, by the Grace of God, to “be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.”—Having thus shewn how you ought to hear and receive the Word of God, I shall now proceed to give some Directions for the Performance of this Duty, that it may be of proper Use and Benefit to the Hearers.—In order that Men may receive properly all pious Instructions, they must first prepare themselves with good and pious Dispositions,—so that when

they hear a Sermon, or any other pious Oration, they may seriously attend to its Dictates,—and not hear barely to gratify a vain Curiosity.—Let Men always charge well their Memories with what they hear in Public, and in the Closet seriously reflect upon it,—though they may be very attentive to the Preacher, and fully convinced of the Truth of his Doctrine,—yet amidst a continual Round of worldly Amusements, the Mind is strangely apt to forget even those very Sentences, which made a more than ordinary Impression upon it.—Hence, without Reflection, the very brightest Ideas of Religion, have often vanished, and come to nothing,—it is similar to “a Man beholding his natural Face in a Glass, who, when he departeth, straightway forgetteth what Manner of Man he was.”—And further, we should be particularly careful never to do, what Conscience forbids,—almost every Man has his Temptations of one Kind or other,—and those which tally with his Inclination are ap

without a seasonable Check, to betray him;—indeed, notwithstanding all our Caution,—we all offend,—for which of us can at any Time compare our Conduct with our Duty, and say, “we have not erred,”—or can any of us, “who have Ears to hear,”—listen to religious Admonitions from the Pulpit, and not find some of them come so Home, as to say, “thou art the Man;”—And where such Sentences strike us, instead of being offended, as is generally the Custom, we should rather lay it to the Heart, and amend the Breach we have so luckily discovered.—This would shew a true religious Principle indeed, and such as God cannot fail to approve and accept.—If I have a Fault, I am certainly obliged to him, who candidly informs me of it,—generously removes the Beam out of my Eye, and thus purges it of that stubborn Film, which has robbed it so long of its genuine Sight;—whereas a contrary Humour, shews a Disposition fraught with Folly, & proves it totally Void of that Temper, which adorns and

beautifies the Christian.—Again, we must not forget that the Word of God was given us for Doctrine, for Reproof, and Instruction;—for Doctrine, to profit;—for Reproof, to correct what is amiss,—and for Instruction, to teach us the Way of Righteousness.—And our Saviour, therefore, strictly enjoins us to “take heed what we hear,”—which he enforces with a very powerful Argument.—Whosoever, says he, hath, or makes a good Use of what he hears, “to him shall be given,”—but whosoever “hath not,” or makes no Improvement of it, “from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.”—But this Consideration has seldom its due Force.—Numbers of Men are apt to consider Preaching as little more than a Business calculated totally for the Interest of the Preacher, and that he has Nothing to do, but barely to please the Audience, either by Elocution or Address,—the Fluency of his Invention,—the Propriety of his Words and Thoughts,—or by the Power of gratifying the Ears of Men,

Folly and Intemperance,——and let him compare his phantom Delights with those Pleasures, which Men of a more noble and refined Way of thinking enjoy, when they contemplate on Virtue in her naked and genuine Simplicity;——and let him then pronounce from which Source spring the most substantial and solid Joys.——The one in its most exalted State is embittered with many Sours,——while the other is free from all impure Mixtures,——and this Life only Ends to renew it in a still more pure and refined Enjoyment.——A State truly desirable,——and what every good and well-disposed Mind must covet to possess,——and to possess it a good Mind will find little Difficulty in the Attempt.——For the Attainment is already half accomplished, and he needs only continue in the Race, he at present is running.——True, for this Purpose, it is every one's Duty to acquaint themselves with the Principles of Religion both natural and revealed,——without now what to practice, upon what Motives,——and to what

End;—we can practise Nothing as we ought:—But, if after we know our Duty, and our Knowledge does not animate our Zeal;—if while we have the Light, we walk not “as Children of Light,”—this will in a greater Measure enflame our Account, and render us Self-condemned upon stronger and more notorious Convictions.—These are Truths which Christians ought often to be reminded of, as they tend very much to the Salvation of the Soul.—But, indeed, who does not know this;—who does not know that Obedience to the Gospel, is every Thing necessary to Salvation,—who does not know that “without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord, and that Jesus Christ is the eternal Salvation to those only that obey him:”—Every one almost knows this,—but we may with Shame observe that very few practise what they know.—Our Faith is generally good,—but our Works are too often in Opposition to it.—Yes,—the Confession and Conduct of Christians very seldom bear any visible degree of Conformity.

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—But he can be reckoned little more than a Madman, who thus dishonestly will fly in the Face of Justice to gratify a poor,--Self-interested Principle, that can at best but satisfy, as it were, for a Moment:—If Conscience ever prevails, —he cannot, I should think, escape both unhappy Days and sleepless Nights:—Conscience makes Cowards of us all, —and we cannot reflect on a Breach of Conduct without Misery. Let Men, therefore, first "take heed what they hear,"—

and they will naturally take heed what they do.—A Minister of Christ, in the Discharge of his pastoral Office, should be very careful and diligent in preaching the Word of God, and shewing the Way to Salvation,—And the Hearers of God's Word, should be as particularly careful to observe and retain what they hear,—else, their repairing to Church, or to any other religious Sanctuary will be to little or no Purpose,—We should not come here with Arrogance to criticise upon, but to receive the Words of the Preacher as they are meant.—St. Paul, though a most eloquent Man, may in many Parts be variously construed, both to a good and a bad Purpose; and those, who wish not clearly to understand him, often from this slender Licence, make a very bad Use of his real Intentions.—The Reason is, they are barely willing to acknowledge the Commandments of God, as reasonable;—but cannot think of practising any one in its full Extent;—however, this does not forbid a Preacher, to continue in

explaining the Articles of Faith, and especially in Case of any dangerous and prevailing Errors or Heresies,—nay, it is his indispensable Duty, because a Neglect of it may hazard the Good in falling from their present Perfection, and there can be little Hopes of ever (without it) retrieving the Bad.—Is it then the Duty of Preachers to inculcate the Necessity of Holiness?—Then it must be the indispensable Duty of Hearers to regard well their holy Instructions,—and if they would not deceive themselves in an Affair of the highest, and most serious Consequence,—let them resolve, by the Grace of God, to “be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.”—Having thus shewn how you ought to hear and receive the Word of God, I shall now proceed to give some Directions for the Performance of this Duty, that it may be of proper Use and Benefit to the Hearers:—In order that Men may receive properly all pious Instructions, they must first prepare themselves with good and pious Dispositions,—so that when

they hear a Sermon, or any other pious Oration, they may seriously attend to its Dictates,—and not hear barely to gratify a vain Curiosity.—Let Men always charge well their Memories with what they hear in Public, and in the Closet seriously reflect upon it,—though they may be very attentive to the Preacher, and fully convinced of the Truth of his Doctrine,—yet amidst a continual Round of worldly Amusements, the Mind is strangely apt to forget even those very Sentences, which made a more than ordinary Impression upon it.—Hence, without Reflection, the very brightest Ideas of Religion, have often vanished, and come to nothing,—it is similar to “a Man beholding his natural Face in a Glass, who, when he departeth, straightway forgetteth what Manner of Man he was.”—And further, we should be particularly careful never to do, what Conscience forbids,—almost every Man has his Temptations of one Kind or other,—and those which tally with his Inclination are apt

without a seasonable Check, to betray him;—indeed, notwithstanding all our Caution,—we all offend,—for which of us can at any Time compare our Conduct with our Duty, and say, “we have not erred,”—or can any of us, “who have Ears to hear,”—listen to religious Admonitions from the Pulpit, and not find some of them come so Home, as to say, “thou art the Man;”—And where such Sentences strike us, instead of being offended, as is generally the Custom, we should rather lay it to the Heart, and amend the Breach we have so luckily discovered.—This would shew a true religious Principle indeed, and such as God cannot fail to approve and accept.—If I have a Fault, I am certainly obliged to him, who candidly informs me of it,—generously removes the Beam out of my Eye, and thus purges it of that stubborn Film, which has robbed it so long of its genuine Sight;—whereas a contrary Humour, shews a Disposition fraught with Folly, & proves it totally Void of that Temper, which adorns and

beautifies the Christian.—Again, we must not forget that the Word of God was given us for Doctrine, for Reproof, and Instruction;—for Doctrine, to profit;—for Reproof, to correct what is amiss;—and for Instruction, to teach us the Way of Righteousness.—And our Saviour, therefore, strictly enjoins us to “take heed what we hear,”—which he enforces with a very powerful Argument.—Whosoever, says he, hath, or makes a good Use of what he hears, “to him shall be given,”—but whosoever “hath not,” or makes no Improvement of it, “from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.”—But this Consideration has seldom its due Force:—Numbers of Men are apt to consider Preaching as little more than a Business calculated totally for the Interest of the Preacher, and that he has Nothing to do, but barely to please the Audience, either by Elocution or Address,—the Fluency of his Invention;—the Propriety of his Words and Thoughts,—or by the Power of gratifying the Ears of Men,

and procuring a favourable Attention.—Whereas the principal End of Preaching concerns much more the Hearers.—The Design of it is, to instruct the Ignorant,—to awaken the Obstinate,—encourage the Virtuous,—warn the Unwary,—and comfort the distressed,—and particularly to promote Piety, by pressing it upon the Conscience with Fervency and Zeal.—Let it then, my beloved, be the Duty of a Christian, if he would Benefit from the Word of God, to pray that he may hear it as he ought;—the meanest Sermon always bears Something in it, from which, by the Grace of God, a Hearer may profit,—but without this all Preaching will be vain and useless.—Let us then seriously beg of God to give us the Privilege of his Grace, and with it the Spirit of Wisdom and Sanctification.—Of Wisdom to enlighten our Minds with the Knowledge of his Truth,—and of Sanctification to purify our Hearts for a due Reception of his holy Word. Now to God the Father, &c.

X
(No. 20.) 3d Chapter, 1st Sam. Verse 18th.

"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

These are the very distinguished Words of Eli,—
at a Time too when he was very much afflicted:—He had
been very remiss in the Government of his Children, which
justly brought upon him his present Sufferings,—his Sons made
even the Lord's People to blaspheme, and yet he punished them
not; but still, what was amiable in him, he bore the Judgments
that befel him with the utmost Resignation, and said, "It is
the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."—Hence his
Conduct here is very commendable, and an excellent Lesson for
him to copy, who acknowledges an over-ruling Providence.—
If we behold the State of the World,—how unsettled and uncer-
tain, we cannot but see ourselves Heirs to Afflictions, as well
as Mercies.—We should, therefore, be careful to prepare our
Tempers so, as to meet Prosperity and Adversity with the

same Face,—for while we are here, Promotion is uncertain,
—as the Will of Providence is, so his Wisdom putteth down
one, and setteth up another.—Men are by no Means the
Carvers of their own Stations, but must refer their Pretensions
to a superior Judgment;—for it is the Lord, hence, “Let
him do what seemeth him good;”—but if we have immediate
regard to God’s Word, we have the greatest Encouragement to
attend to his Duty, and the most persuasive Arguments to fly
Vice;—for the Lord saith, “them that honor me, I will
honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”—
Should then all our Honors cease,—all our Wealth sink into
Poverty,—all our Joys take their Flight,—and should we in
a Moment, as it were, fall from the Heights of the most
gratifying Enjoyments to the lowest State of Misery and
Want,—it is prudent in us,—nay it is a most sublime
Virtue, and I’ll be bound to say, the readiest Cure, to bear
these Disasters with Patience, and submissively bend to

Almighty Power:—Eli was once blessed with every Enjoyment this World could give; and, I dare say, he never dreamt in the Midst of so much Plenty, as he enjoyed, that any Judgments would ever "bring his grey Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave."—Yet he met these Judgments, and met them with Patience."—"The Terrors of the Lord were set in Array against him,"—and all his Expectations and Enjoyments of Life were dashed at one fatal Summons."—"Behold," saith the Lord, "I will cut off thine Arm, and the Arm of thy Father's House, that there shall not be an old Man in thine House for ever;"—and yet notwithstanding all this, the Sufferer keeps his Temper,—opposes no Arms,—rests under no Shield, but Patience and Resignation:—He condemns not the Lawfulness of God's Proceeding,—offers no palliating Arguments to lessen his Crimes,—nor utters any Complaint at the Severity of his Doom:—But wisely acknowledges the Justice of his Sentence, and throws himself on the Mercy of Providence

—And again, the Consideration of losing at one Stroke his Family and Sons might seem to have had a Different and a more alarming Effect upon him; for what can be more mortifying to helpless and declining Age, than to see the Pledges of its Love torn at an untimely Period from its Bosom; —for, to have a tender Concern for its Offspring, though never so disobedient, is the first Principle of Nature.—Absalom was by no Means an obedient Son, and yet in what moving and pathetic Terms did his Father express his Sorrow for his Death.—“O says he, my Son Absalom, my Son, my Son, would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom my Son!”—and this too he exclaimed at a Time when he was in actual Rebellion against him, and studying by the basest Means to dethrone him.—We see then how easily the Father conquers the Man, and forgives the Rebellion of a Subject, because he is a Son.—Now Eli’s Affection for his Sons is equally as strong as that of David for Absalom.—

For, no sooner did he hear of the Ark of God being taken, and his Sons slain by the Philistines, than he expired; though in the mean Time they had been very disobedient, and remarkably vile; but he was a tender and too indulgent a Parent,—he rebuked his Children, but in too cowardly a Manner,—for the blackest Crimes, he only in the mildest Manner would say,—“ My Sons, why do ye these Things?—it is no good Report that I hear of you,—you make even the Lord’s People to transgress.”—This Reprimand you see is too mild, and little suited either to the Crimes,—or the Condition of the Offenders,—Nor uttered with the Authority of a Father, or the Spirit of a Judge.—True, many Parents have the Knowledge, but not always the Power to govern.—They can raise the Rod of Correction, but the natural Affection of the Parent too often unmans and enfeebles the Stroke.—The Bow may be strung, but when the Arrow is pointed at the Breast of a Child,—the String slackens at the Prospect,—and the pointed Arrow

falls blunted on the Ground:—But Children so governed, being naturally prone to Evil, become too often what they are naturally inclined to be,—for if a Child is once accustomed to sin without restraint, he soon loses his Liberty, and becomes a Slave to Wickedness and Vice, and hence is Nothing more than so much Poison and Infection set abroad on the Earth.—But to leave this Narrative, which I hope will not be unprofitable,—let us turn more immediately upon the Duty of the Text, (*viz.*) Humility,—Contentment,—and Resignation to the Will of God in all the various Scenes and Circumstances of this mortal Life.—The Subject justly demands our very serious Attention both as Men and Christians,—for here we have no continuing City,—but one that is liable to decay, and subject to sudden and frequent Changes:—The Lord lifteth up one and setteth down another:—Would we then wish to run t'rough the Stages of adverse, as well as prosperous Fortune with Composure,—we must learn the Art of true Reasoning so,

that we may manage with Prudence, or suffer with Contentment. Reason tells us, that there is a God, the prime and original Cause of all created Existence;—that there is a visible Hand of Providence in whatever befalls us here;—and hence, the Blessings we enjoy, and the Miseries we feel are all of them by divine Appointment.—Even the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered, and not so much as one of them shall be diminished; nor shall even a Sparrow fall to the Ground without his Knowledge and Permission.—If then we should be reduced to the hardest and most insufferable Necessities:—Let us reflect, and humbly consider, that it is the Lord, and therefore, he has an undoubted Right to do, what seemeth him good.—This would shew the greatest Prudence in us, and discover a religious Principle, founded on sound Reason;—let his Pleasure then be ours;—let Patience possess our Souls;—let Reason guide, and Submission regulate all our Actions;—from God we must expect our Doom;—and from our own Actions we must

expect Happiness or Misery;—for God, by his unerring Wisdom, determines all Events.—It is not then for the Clay to say to the Potter, why hast thou made me thus?—Surely the Maker has it in his Power to form it as he pleases,—and therefore, God, who is the Maker of all,—who is the Judge of Merit, and the disposer of Favours,—who settles Families, or overturns Kingdoms at Will,—surely may promote or degrade, augment or reduce the Fortunes of Men, and make them to honor or dishonor, as he pleases;—and as it is his peculiar Pleasure, to see his Creatures aim at Justice, and wish to act agreeably to his divine Laws,—so he can never be a Tempter and Exciter to Vice and Immorality.—What Creatures, then, must Men be, who have to deal with such Power, and such infinite Goodness, and still are daringly Obdurate and unwilling to oblige?—Can they see themselves exposed to infinite and imminent Danger, and yet refuse to be protected?—And can they suffer

themselves to be intreated by purest, immaculate Goodness, and yet refuse to be comforted?—Where then is there Room for him to murmur at his Situation, who is his own Tormentor. —If a Man falls into a Pit through Indolence, or is distressed through Obstinacy,—it is not Providence, but his own Folly that must be blamed;—for Providence is always ready to help the oppressed,—to aid the weak,—and encourage the obedient,—nay, he is always ready to do for us, much more than either we desire or deserve;—he is ever ready to assist penitent Sinners in reforming their evil Habits,—to strengthen the Resolutions of the Virtuous, and render their Duty easy and delightful;—to supply inward Strength for extraordinary Trials and Extremities;—to lay restraints on intemperate Passions, and divert from hurtful Purposes.—Where then would we wish for Succour?—where apply to, but to God himself?—He is a Being of infinite Perfection,—and the Creator,—Governor,—Father,—and Friend of

Mankind.—Let us then endeavour to temper our Minds so, as to the reforming of our Manners,—and let our Success, —Prosperity,—and Honour, not altogether depend on our own Resolutions, and course of Action, but be committed to the Care and Direction of Providence, into whose Lap the Lot is cast,—and, therefore, it is Prudence, as well as our Duty, to be content in whatever State we are.—Whatever be our Part in this great Theatre,—let us beg of God to enable us to perform it well,—and then it will be a Matter of Indifference to us, whether the Character we support be high or low,—and for Contentment in our particular Situation, the Motives are very numerous.—Consider the End of Afflictions, and balance impartially the Good we enjoy against the Evil we suffer,—if we contemplate the Mercy of God in the Midst of Judgments,—consider the Preservation of Life, amidst an innumerable Train of Hazards and Misfortunes;—our Reason will make us happy.—We should then exclaim

with the Prophet Jeremiah, in the Midst of his Lamentations for himself, and Country, and say,—“Why doth a living Man complain, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins?”—God, if we consider his Nature, cannot possibly delight in the Punishment, nor in the Misery of his Creatures, nor will he “easily grieve or afflict the Children of Men.”—Hence his very Chastisements must be Mercies, and his Visitations so many Acts of fatherly Goodness.—Did he glory in our Affliction, he might suffer us to continue in the pleasant Ways of Sin without a Check, and without any Impeachment of his Justice consign us to eternal Death.—But his Goodness will not suffer us to be totally undone,—but rather wishes to make us sensible of our Errors,—and by Mortifications and Disappointments,—by Pains and Diseases,—and by Losses and Disasters, recal us to our Duty.—Why, then, should we make ourselves Uneasy for what we cannot remedy?—Why should our Hearts fret against the Lord, when it is

own Folly that perverteth our Ways.—Let us, therefore, bless God, as well when he taketh away, as when he gives.—What we have, is not our own, but lent us;—Why then should we murmur at having that taken from us, we do not properly Husband?—It is the Lord's, why then should we repine at his proceedings, when his Justice only resumes, what his Mercy has lent us?—Why lament the Hardships of our Fate, seeing we enjoy much more than we deserve,—and our Circumstances in general are on a Level with our Neighbours. If we see some above us, we may see many more below us, and even the very worst Condition here should never be repined at, for he, who made us, could make it ten Times worse.—In a Word then, my beloved, let our future Conduct be such, that in all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life, we may with Composure say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."—Now to God the Father, &c. &c. Amen.

X

(No. 21.) 8th Chapter St. Mark, Verse 34th.

"He said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me."

The Man who here wishes the People to follow him, was certainly the Purest of all Flesh;—he was no less a Personage than the Anointed,—the Holy One,—the Son of God himself;—therefore it can be no mean Character to become his Disciple,—and the Words of the Text, if properly understood, are very urgent to make us such, and consequently of the highest Moment to Mankind in general;—What is meant by the Word denying here is certainly very extensive: "If any Man," says he,—meaning "any one of Mankind,—however distinguished, Jew or Gentile,—nay of whatever Sort or Condition he be, would follow me, he must deny himself."—i. e. totally abstain as far as his Nature will,

allow from every Sin,—for (the Words naturally suggest) on no other Terms will he acknowledge him a sincere and approved Disciple.—This indeed, to false Ideas, may seem hard and severe,—but to take off this Notion, and to reconcile us to it,—I shall endeavour to shew what is meant by Self-denial,—vindicate it from any Imputation of Severity;—and hence prove to you how reasonable it is:—My beloved, the Word deny, I doubt not is well known among you,—it is not to be wondered if every one of you has both denied and been denied:—What Man can say I have often been importuned, and always favoured the Question,—I have often had Beggars at my Door, and never turned them away empty,—or can a Man for Shame acknowledge, that he never curbed a pressing Inclination, or flew in the Face of Temptation:—If a Man cannot do these Things, he must have some Idea of Denial in general.

—But what we are chiefly to consider here is Self-denial:—

Let us then first consider well our Natures,—what various Tendencies,—various Appetites,—Affections and Passions are constantly prompting us to different Actions and Proceedings, and when the Mind, deliberating on the Whole, chooses some one in particular, and rejects the rest,—those, thus rejected, must be denied,—and, as these Motions proceed all from within, the thwarting and controuling such Motions must be, in the true Sense of the Expression, a Self-denial, and such as our Religion requires of us.—To speak in the Style of the sacred Writer St. James.—When the Conceptions of Lust are encouraged, and kick up the Beam of Suspence,—then Sin prevails,—but when Conscience outweighs, then we see an Act of Christian Self-denial perfected.—This Notion of the Springs of Action in the human Heart is not only familiar in the Scriptures, but in all other moral Writings,—without it, indeed, we could not possibly understand the Practice of Virtue in our present State of Trial and Discipline.—

Without it we should be level with the Brutes that perish;
—that are moved only by Instinct to pursue their proper
Objects.—Whereas, we are capable of Reflection, and are blessed
with higher Faculties and Affections, to which the animal
Creation are subordinate,—As free Agents, we have Liberty to
pursue or not pursue at will the noble Ends of our rational and
mortal Powers,—and from hence the Apostles' Expression becomes
verified:—"The Spirit lusteth against the Flesh, and the
Flesh against the Spirit, and these two are contrary the one
to the other."—St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, gives
a very lively Description, as in his own Person, of two opposite
Interests or Principles in one Man,—says he,—“That
which I do, I allow not; for what I would, I do not, but
what I hate, that I do.—If then I do that which I would
not, I consent unto the Law that it is good,—I delight in
the Law of God, after the inward Man.—But I see another
Law, that wareth against the Law of my Mind, and

bringeth me into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Flesh.—O wretched Man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?"—Thus we see the whole Complex of inward Temptations, which arise from the Body, and often entice and draw Men from the right Way,—which Temptations the Mind in its true State will always struggle to deny,—or bring them into proper Government and Subjection.—Again,—do not we find natural Aversions to bodily pain?—And don't we find Impulses of Resistance,—to resist Injuries, and keep off Harm offered by a voluntary Invader?—These are properly animal Instincts, as they may be seen in Beasts, as well as Men, and seem to have been intended by the original Author of them, for their Safety only, though often carried beyond the Bounds it prescribes.—But besides these Instincts implanted in us,—there are also many Propensities contracted from the Knowledge of the World, which are particulars of the SELF, that ought very carefully to

denied.—When we step upon the Stage of Life, and view the many Characters upon it,—what a Difference do we see in the Actors?—Some have greater Measures of Power,—others more Respect and Honor barely from a good Name;—some are pressed down with Poverty,—while others are crowned with Wealth, and followed with a long Train of Attendants:—The Advantage of which Superiority is easily seen:—It furnishes more abundantly the Means of various Enjoyments.—Hence arise strong desires for Riches and Grandeur, which are far from the real Intention of our Being, and therefore ought carefully to be retrenched by the Power of the Mind;—for if indulged, they imperceptibly grow up to the pernicious Vices of Covetousness and Ambition, or what St. John calls, "The Lusts of the Eyes, and Pride of Life;" which in the End are the total Ruin and Destruction of all their Followers.—Is there a Hardship then in rooting out the Weed of Perdition?—
is it severe to be doomed to perpetual Misery, for not checking

in Time a pernicious Folly?—A Folly that reflects little Credit or Advantage either to ourselves or others,—but rather marks us, as Objects of Resentment,—and consequently brings upon us the Disrespect of Mankind in general.—Hence, this Joy, which a Profligate may call severe, is rather to a good Man a Pleasure than a Pain,—as it is always attended with the pleasing Reflection of being good ourselves, and of having the Goodwill of all about us,—for what can give more real Satisfaction, than to have our Acquaintance courted, and to gain the Respect of all, who know us,—and this is always the Result of that Behaviour, which denies itself of those vicious Pursuits, which are pernicious both to the Body and Soul.—True, our Constitution is such, that we cannot live entirely free from Blame,—but it is happy for us, that God will accept of our best Services, weak as they are, instead of an unerring Obedience.—The Fault then of all our Gratifications lies only in the Excess,—There are proper Limits beyond which t!

should not extend.—We may eat and drink so far as Necessity requires,—but to be drunk with Wine, renders us unfit for rational and virtuous Exercises, and consequently becomes a necessary Sin to be denied.—Many are the glaring Sins that ought to be avoided, and particularly Adultery,—Theft, —and Murder;—we must beware then of the Incentives to these; for Lasciviousness may prompt a Man to the most odious Acts of Impurity,—Covetousness may solicit him to steal,—and Anger may make him commit such outrageous Cruelties as he may for ever miserably regret.—Let a Self-denial then take Place, and restrain such Exorbitances;—for where such are suffered, a Man must be abandoned to himself in the worst Sense;—and Conscience must have lost its Sovereignty, where it does not interpose, and effectually prevent such heinous Transgressions.—Reflection and Resolution will curb the worst of Vices, and Master the deepest Impression on the strongest Inclination;—but if we indulge Appetite without Controul,

it will soon grow into Habit, and hence deprive the superior Powers of their just Dominion;—and therefore, “As the Ethiopian cannot change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots,—so they, who have been accustomed to do evil, cannot learn to do well,”—or, to be as favourable as possible, will find it very difficult;—and the Conquest, if attained, cannot be without a Struggle.—Since then, a regular Course of Life and Manners;—a doing Justice to Ourselves and Neighbours;—an uniform Order, and an harmonious Carriage of Equity between Man and Man, is the only Method to be happy here and hereafter;—and since it is in every Man’s Power to be what God will accept,—Pray, where is the Reason of Complaint against Providence, as severe?—Is it hard we cannot pursue those Things, which are odious to Sense and Reason, and which in the End make us a Burthen to ourselves, and justly despicable both in the Eye of God, and every good Man, who wishes to support an amiable Character?

—The Evidence of this cannot but appear to the weakest Understanding,—and therefore, I shall leave it, and further shew you the Reasonableness of a Self-denial.—If we look at this our State of Probation and Discipline, and consider what Manner of Behaviour and Conduct tends most to our Advantage and Interest,—we must naturally see the Reasonableness of this Precept of Self-denial,—it is the Ground of Virtue, and the Basis of real Enjoyments both here and hereafter.—By this we make a prudent Use of those Means Providence puts in our Power.—The great Hindrance of Happiness here, is the Indulgence of inordinate Appetites and Passions;—but let me ask,—who is the Man that really enjoys Life?—is it the Glutton,—the Drunkard,—the Sluggard,—the Proud,—the Revengesful,—or the Cruel?—By no Means.—Who then?—Surely those who are Masters of themselves,—that can thwart their own Humours,—bridle their Appetites,—and deny all sensual Inclinations,—and these are not only those,

who enjoy Life,—but those, who are well advanced in moral Perfection, and who may rest well assured that their State is such, as bids very fair for Salvation.—Let us consider how great,—how noble the Ends of Virtue,—of moral Perfection,—and of future Happiness, are above those of the present Life,—and we shall never complain of the Severity of denying ourselves of many worldly Charms.—Can we account him more than a Fool, who will not refuse himself some earthly, superfluous, vicious Pleasures to prevent a fatal Disease.—Who will sacrifice a Prospect of lawful Gain, to sloth and idleness,—to cheating and deceit?—Nay, who will risque his Reputation, to gratify any unlawful Desire?—And what shall we think of the Man, who will wilfully Indulge himself in these, or such like Passions, at the Expence of his Integrity,—the inward Peace of his Mind, and what is much more, his Hopes of Heaven.—All that can be further said is, that if a Man will indulge himself wi

evil Gratifications,—he must one Day yield to the Penalty of God's eternal Displeasure.—Hence, let us observe, with our Saviour, that " 'tis better for a Man to enter into Life, halt, or maimed, or having but one Eye,—than having two Hands,—two Feet,—or two Eyes, to be cast into Hell Fire, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched." —In a Word, then, let us carefully restrain our Desires within such Bounds, as to preserve the Supremacy of Conscience, to form our Tempers, and direct our Conduct,—and as it is totally for our own Benefit and Credit,—let us, as far as is possible, acquiesce in the great, and reasonable Commands of Heaven, whereby alone we shall procure to ourselves everlasting Salvation.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

X
(No. 22.)

Psalm 139th, Verse 4th.

"There is not a Word in my Tongue, but lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."

From this Sentence let it be granted, that the Omnipotence of God is true, beyond a Doubt;—and from hence, I shall endeavour, in the following Discourse, to point out to you the Reasonableness of God's Omniscience and all-seeing Providence,—of the Justice of his dealing severely with impenitent Sinners,—and describe to you what particular Words, for God knows them all, we have Reason to think will be most regarded, and tend most either to justify or condemn us.—If then we look into this our lower World, if we behold the Actions of Men, we cannot but see the Necessity of human Laws to punish:—Without them, what a Scene of Havock and Confusion would present itself.—What Tyrants have we already, notwithstanding this Advantage.—Tyrants that scruple not to use most barbarously

their fellow Creatures; and even to take away that Life they cannot possibly give;—and if Men are so vile, so wicked under such restraints;—how would they be then, when all such Obstacles were totally removed?—Certainly from hence, we have the most cogent Right to infer,—that there is an indispensable Necessity for an Almighty Being to oversee,—to govern,—to condemn,—or justify all Flesh,—and this, not only for the Peace of one single Individual, but for the Happiness of all Mankind in general.—To prove this, I by no Means see the Necessity of a long Chain of Arguments;—since any one of the least Penetration cannot but see what Discord and Confusion must inevitably fill the World without it.—Was there no Fear, I am afraid there would be no Religion, and hence all human Harmony would cease,—but happy for us there is not a Word in the Tongue, but the Lord knows it altogether; he besets us behind and before, and justly lays his Hand upon us:—Let us therefore join with holy David, and say,

—"Surely, O God, thou wilt slay the Wicked,—depart from me therefore ye blood thirsty Men.—For they speak wickedly against thee, and thine Enemies take thy Name in vain.—I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee, and am grieved with those that rise up against thee.—Search me, O Lord, and try me, and if there is any Wickedness in me, do lead me in the righteous Way."—My beloved, such Words as these are well becoming the Mouth of a Christian, and such as will be well pleasing in the Sight of God, and a Credit to us in the Eyes of all good Men.—Power and Omniscience, saith the Scripture, belong unto God:—Certainly so;—for, in what majestic Lines is this Attribute of the Jehovah described throughout the whole Volume of the Creation?—Look up to yonder starry Frame, and see Omnipotence displayed with the utmost Pomp:—Who that looks up to the midnight Sky, and with an Eye of Reason beholds its rolling Wonders, without enquiring, ~~of what~~ of what were those mighty Orbs produced?—Amazing

to relate! They were formed without Materials.—They sprung from Emptiness itself.—The stately Fabric of universal Nature emerged out of Nothing.—A bare Fiat accomplished all.—“Let them be, said God, and all was done.”—This God then, that created all in a Word, must necessarily hear, see, and even know what we mean to say or do, before we do it,—which brings me further to point out to you, what particular Words will, in all Probability, be most regarded, and tend most either to justify or condemn us.—Now there are Words which too frequently fall from the Tongue, which according to the Scripture Term are called idle Words,—such as are spoken inconsiderately without a due Regard to their immediate import, or to their natural Consequences and Effects,—without ever considering that they shall be accounted for, nay rather supposing, they will not be attended to, I should think, in the Day of Judgment,—when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open,—but, against the Time of that solemn, awful Pro-

cess, all our Words shall be produced, and their Tendency examined;—and if to a virtuous End they shall help to justify; but if to a vicious Purpose they shall equally tend to condemn us,—and if no Word, even the most trifling, can escape the Knowledge of our final Judge;—what Reason can there be, why we should not account for the most Idle of them?—Do we think them beneath the Notice of God? If we do, we are grievously mistaken.—True, in one Sense, they are very far beneath him, and so are the very best Things that Man can boast of; which gave Occasion to the Psalmist's exclaiming as he did, in an humble Sense of human Frailties and Imperfections,—" Lord what is Man that thou takest Knowledge of him, or the Son of Man that thou makest Account of him?"—And again, " Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his Dwelling so high; and yet humbleth himself to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth?"—Yes,—the very meanest Concerns of human Life a

equally as much his Care, as the greatest; or rather the greatest is as unworthy him, as the least; for if he is not too high to overlook the one, he will not fail to inspect the other.—The Truth is, it is not the Importance of what we say, that commands the Attention of God,—but his own sovereign Wisdom and Justice.—The former would be deficient if he did not judge,—and the latter equally so, if he did not punish or reward it.—To suppose otherwise is an Injury offered to the Honor of God, and argues an Imperfection in his Nature.—It is evident, therefore, that every Word we speak, however light and inconsiderate, will make a Part of that Account, which is to sentence us to Happiness or Misery for ever.—It is in its Nature a moral Action, and as such is liable to be either punished or rewarded.—It is from hence a Duty very incumbent upon Mankind to weigh very seriously the Consequence of every Sentence before he utters it,—and where is the Tongue so tious and unruly, that no Profit or Reward can curb?—

For if the Law had made an Offence of the Tongue capital, so that Death had been the immediate Consequence;—who, in his sober Senses, would rashly venture his Life, for the Commission of an inconsiderate Speech?—For Instance, would not every Man in this Situation have been equally as afraid of Blasphemy, as of Treason? Of injuring and assaulting his Neighbour's Character, as of invading his Person or Estate?—Therefore, it is clear, that, though to bridle the Tongue may be very difficult, yet it is far from impossible.—Let us, then, not only refrain from such Expressions, as may be prejudicial to Man,—but also be particularly careful how they may please an Almighty God,—who weighs every Action,—and suffers not even the smallest Word to escape the Scale of his Justice,—his Notice,—or Attention.—The Words which are particularly disagreeable to him, are those blasphemous and profane Speeches, which are too frequent in common Conversation.—Swearing, is that Sin, which can never be too much complained of.—Consider, an

Oath is a solemn Thing, and ought only to be used on very particular Occasions,—to end Controversies in weighty Matters, which cannot otherwise be clearly or satisfactorily decided,—And, therefore, to use Oaths on trivial Affairs, argues great Profaneness and Irreverence to Almighty God,—and besides it very often surprises Men unawares into Perjury.—How often is this the Case with Men, who intermingle their Discourse with careless Oaths?—And did Men of this Stamp observe, they would always find it answers a bad Purpose,—for an Oath in common Conversation, among Men of Sense, does not confirm, but weaken a Man's Word,—for, if common Swearing carries any Meaning in it,—it must argue a perpetual Self-distrust of ones own Reputation, and is an Acknowledgement, that a Man thinks his bare Word not worthy of credit;—and it is so far from adorning, that it defaces Discourse, and shews the Speaker to be a perfect Stranger to good Breeding,—For, as it defaces Convers-

sation,—so it offends the Taste,—and grates upon the Ear of those sorer Minds, that cannot hear the glorious Name of God irreverently lost upon slight Occasions.—Neither is it any Excuse to Men to plead Ignorance of what they say;—because they must have been very bad before Custom could have made a bad Habit so natural;—and should not this Consideration make Men very careful in encouraging the Beginning of any Vice, which Custom makes so very familiar.—True, the very worst Habits may be left off by Care and Resolution;—but how few are they, who take this Care and Resolution?—And yet in regard to Speech, nothing is so easy,—for certainly he that can choose whether he will speak or not, may also choose whether he will swear or not, when he does speak;—and what makes it worse than many other Sins, is, because he has the least Temptation to it.—Profit or Pleasure it cannot have,—nor is there any Thing in Men's natural Tempers to excite them to it;—for though some Men may seem to swear nature

yet certainly no Man was ever born with such an Inclination.
—All then, that can be said for it, is, that it must proceed from the Example of Parents, from Custom or Fashion; Very poor Excuses;—for we are very duly and timely warned not “to follow a Multitude to do evil.”—Again, another Way of dishonouring God’s Name is, by disrespectful, indifferent Language,—and by bold, presumptuous Reflections on those Things, which immediately belong to him, (viz.) his Word or Religion.—I need not enlarge on this horrid and too common a Practice,—it is too well known, what Pride and Pleasure some Persons take in Offences of this kind, as if there was Wit in ridiculing, or Courage in provoking an Almighty Being;—but let such consider, that this is a most heinous and grievous Offence, as it borders very much upon that Sin, which our Saviour tells us shall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come,—and let me observe, that a Time will come, when

among the idle Words that Men are apt to utter, these Impieties, wantonly thrown away, will make a dreadful and severe Account,—and when Men will with Shame and Sorrow confess, that there was neither Wit nor Wisdom in them, nor Severity in God's Justice.—Again, I cannot omit mentioning another Set of Words, which are very common, and must be very prejudicial, not only to ourselves, but others:—Such are those meant to defame our honest, well-meaning Neighbours, by secret, unfair Means;—this, I am sorry to observe, is an Offence so very common in the World, that I am afraid few are totally free from it;—True, there are some to be found, would to God they were more, who have too much Conscience to delight in any Thing that is false, and too much Humanity to be pleased with a bad Story, even if it were true.—But how many have we that are mere Professors only of this amiable Quality,—who feel nothing of the generous and candid Sentiments that attend it;

—and the Praises of such Men, are sure Indications of uncharitable Hearts, even as much so, as the most virulent Reproaches,—for, “ Their Words are smoother than Oil, and yet they be very Swords,”—Wounding the Reputation of Men much more under the delusive Colour of Friendship,—but however such a Practice may be hid to the Notice of Men,—yet it cannot escape the Eye of Providence, for there is not a Word, nay, not even a Thought in the Breast, “ but lo! thou Lord, knowest it altogether.”—If then, in short, we wish to be justified, let our Words and Actions be consonant, and consistent with our Saviour's Rules.—Let us, “ keep our Mouths as it were with a Bridle,—let us pray to God for his Succour and Defence, that the Influence of his helping Grace may set a Watch over our Mouths, and keep the Door of our Lips;” so, that out of the Abundance of what the Mouth speaketh, we may never be tempted to utter any Thing contrary to the divine Dictates of the Gospel. Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

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(No. 23.) 22d Chapter Job, Verse 23d.

" If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up,
thou shalt put away Iniquity far from thy Tabernacles."

Happiness, I presume, is the grand Object of every wise Man's Care,—and how can it so easily be attained, in its greatest Perfection here, as by turning to him, who is able to give it;—and though, to this End we were actually formed and made,—yet, from the Depravity of Man, one would scarce believe it;—he is so amazingly averse to entertain the least Familiarity with God;—that in his Actions he seems to shun him;—he precipitately flies from him, even though God himself intreats him;—and though, in the Interim, his chief Happiness depends on his ready Compliance with such Invitations.—If Sickness or Pain, indeed, afflicts, the Body, we sometimes choose to apply the Remedy, though with small Hopes of Success;—and why? Because we are so little acquainted with him, that we doubt of his Power;

—yet we too often neglect this excellent Medicine, even in the Midst of our greatest Troubles;—notwithstanding our Souls are disordered and restless, tossed and disquieted, between contrary Ends and Interests, and ever missing what they aim at;—I say, though this is our Situation, yet we are amazingly Backward in applying this incomparable and infallible Cure;—we foolishly choose rather to nourish the Pain under which we groan, than wisely to apply the Remedy:—Excellent, then, was the Advice of Eliphaz to Job, under the Weight of his Afflictions,—says he,—“If thou turn unto the Lord thou shalt be built up,”—a most comfortable Assurance, and seasonable Advice,—as much as to say,—now make the true Use of those Distresses, which the Hand of God, mercifully severe, lays upon you.—Calm the Disorders of your Mind by reflecting that this Severity, is an Act of Kindness, intended only to awaken your Senses, and to give you an Opportunity of correcting, in Season, those Errors

you are now foolishly committing;—retreat to such Considerations, and wisely shelter yourself under them, and disengage yourself from too close an Attention to the Things of this World;—true the Business,—the Pleasures of it are striking Amusements;—yet we should not so greedily pursue these as to contract such an Intimacy with them, as to render it difficult to call our Minds off, and fix them on Things of greater and better Moment.—To check, then, such an evil Tendency as this, it is certainly Necessary for Parents to inculcate an early Principle of Religion, and a due Knowledge of God ⁱⁿ the Breasts of their Children, when yet tender, and capable of an effectual Impression;—a Practice which is too little attended to,—and yet of the greatest and most essential Importance both to their present and future Happiness;—for by this Means, Men would work up their Souls into such a filial Awe and Love of God,—such an humble and implicit Dependence upon him, as is the

Root and Principle of all Manner of Virtue and Goodness;—
thus our Duty would soon become our Pleasure, and we should
have a true Delight in addressing God on all Occasions;—
When we were distressed, we should open our Griefs, and impart
all our Wants to him, with that holy Freedom to which true
Servants of God are alone entitled;—thus, as the Scripture
tells us, “ we should set God always before us,—draw near
to him,—and delight in approaching him.”—Would we then
wish to return unto God?—Would we wish that he should build
us up?—And would we wish that Iniquity should be rooted
out from among us?—Then let us endeavour to have some
Knowledge of him;—I don’t mean a speculative Knowledge,
built on abstracted Reasonings about his Nature,—but a
practical one of these Attributes of his, which wins our Affections,
so, as makes us wish for Nothing so much, as to be nearly
united to him;—let us, then, endeavour after a thorough Sense
of his unspotted Holiness,—paternal Care,—his inflexible

Justice,—and unerring Wisdom.—Let us behold him in his true Light,—as a Creator, and a Redeemer,—a Lawgiver, and a Judge;—these and such like moral and relative Perfections of the Deity are most easy and most necessary by us to be understood,—and the oftener we consider them, the better, and more perfectly shall we still know them.—This is the Way to have a due Sense of God,—this is the Way to get rid of our Iniquities, and this is the true Way to return to the Almighty;—and we may rest well assured, “that he will draw near to those, who thus approach him.”—Would we then wish to continue this Intimacy, as I shall call it, with God?—Then we must have frequent access to him, and seek his Face in all the Methods of spiritual Address,—in Contemplation and Prayer,—in the public Service of the Sanctuary,—and in the private Devotions of the Closet;—Yet, we must not stop here, for in vain shall we approach him,—unless we imitate him, and endeavour to be like him.—A Similitude of

Nature and Manners, (as much as possible) must tie the holy Knot, and rivet the Friendship between us.—But there is still a particular and a necessary Ingredient in all true Friendship, which I cannot omit, viz. a firm, and an unshaken Reliance on him, who is our Friend.—Have we then such towards God?—Do we entirely trust in him?—Do we resign ourselves entirely to his Will?—Do we think all our Affairs safer in his Hands, than under our own Care?—And resolve to believe every Thing most expedient for us, which he thinks meet should befall us?—Are we ever under his Rod without a Murmur;—If so, then we are surely returned unto God,—we are well purged of our Iniquities,—and our Friendship with God is such, as will be lasting and permanent.—O well it is with us, happy are we! and happy shall we be!—But to be perfectly certain of this,—let us again consider, if we love the Lord our God, and this, “with all our Hearts,—with all our Soul,—and with all our Strength.”—If we do, we shall approach him

with Pleasure,—we shall often retire into the Closet from the Crowd to meet him whom our Soul loveth.—We shall ever have a burning Zeal for his Honor and Service, and always be contriving Something for his Interest, without any immediate Regard to our own.—When we find ourselves thus daily employed and happy under it;—then is our Spirit advanced to the nearest Degree of Union with the Great Father of all, of which it is capable on this side Heaven;—and then too we may justly be called the true Friends of God.—Thus then have I shewn you what it is to return to the Almighty,—and to be his Friends,—allow me then to set before you its Reasonableness,—its great Use and Benefit.—Can any Thing exalt our Natures more than such a Conduct.—Here our Spirits mount up on the Wings of Contemplation and Love to the first Principle and Cause of all Things;—see,—and admire his surpassing Excellence, and feel its reviving Power;—and shall we be capable of all this, or '

not enjoy it?—God forbid,—it is certainly a great Blessing to us that God should admit us to such an unmerited Participation of himself,—and give us Minds capable of such an Intercourse with the supreme, universal Mind.—It is evident, therefore, that God is our most munificent Friend,—wisest Counsellor, and most liberal Benefactor.—Hence he must inevitably enjoy a tranquil Mind at ease, who is a Friend of God, and to whom God is a Friend,—who despises all meaner Pursuits, and is regardless of all lower Advantages;—who lives as if To-morrow was his last,—who looks up to God in every Step of his Conduct,—imitates him to the best of his Power,—believes him without Doubt,—and obeys him without reserve,—acts according to his Will,—and resolves to fear Nothing beyond or besides his Displeasure.—Surely such an one hath within his Breast, “ that Peace which passeth all Understanding ” —is inconceivable to those who are Strangers to it,—

and unutterable even by those upon whom it rests.—In vain shall the scornful sensual Aggressor call for an Account of it, which can never be given him, as it hath no Alliance with those Pleasures in which he delights.—A Death Bed may indeed somewhat awaken him, and bring him to a Sense of his Duty; but it is very dangerous to trust an Affair of such Importance,—perhaps to a momentary Opportunity.—Let us then seize Opportunity by her Forelock,—and not neglect that in Time, which we may repent of in Eternity.—God does not neglect us,—why then do we foolishly and carelessly neglect ourselves.—Though God may in some Respects appear hard and severe in his Dispensations,—yet his bitterest Visitations, rightly understood, are only meant to soften our Hearts to such Degrees as he finds necessary to the good Purposes of his Grace,—to wean us gently from earthly Things, which we must one Day leave,—to convince us of the Vanity of the transitory Pleasures of this Life;—and to shew us the true

Value of those unspeakable Enjoyments, which the Righteous shall infallibly inherit in Eternity;—and when we are brought to such a Knowledge and Understanding, with what Pleasure and Delight shall we turn to him, who is rich in Mercies, and Mighty to save?—Happy, extremely happy are all those, who by Means of a ^{virtuous} vicious Temper, and a religious Education, have been trained up from their Infancy in a due Sense and Knowledge of the supreme Good,—who have contracted an Affection for God, at that youthful Season, when our Love is most sincere and true,—most tender and passionate;—and most firm and durable:—Behold then was the Day of Salvation, then the accepted Time, when God most valued the Offer of our Hearts;—and when we could give them up with the greatest Ease.—Let us not, therefore, neglect so favourable an Opportunity of Salvation in Youth, whilst our Minds are yet untainted with Evil, and uncorrupted with vicious Habits,—Customs,—or Examples;—for when we

have once thoroughly devoted ourselves to God, there will be no Trials of our Virtue so sharp; no Evils so great; but we shall be able to sustain them:—For then, "God will be our Hope and Strength, a very present Help in Time of Trouble."—And we may justly say with Holy David, "I have set God always before me, he is on my right Hand, therefore I shall not fall."—No Man had ever studied the Arts of holy Living better than he, nor with greater Care:—Nor had any Man more diligently practised what he knew;—"His Delight was in the Law of God, and in that he exercised himself Day and Night.—He took Heed to his Feet, and ordered all his Steps aright, that he might run the Way of God's Commandments;"—and that he might secure to himself a regular and uniform Course of Virtue.—"He set God always before him;—watched early and late;—remembered him on his Bed, and thought on him when he was waking."—Thus he became "the Man after God's own Heart".

It was this that enabled him to fulfil the public Character of a religious and merciful Prince, and a Father of his People: Thus then let the Sons and Daughters of Affliction look up to him that hath bruised them, and say with David, "When I am in Heaviness I will think upon God; when my Heart is vexed, I will complain unto him."—Yes, let us, my beloved, let us imitate the Pattern of this royal Sufferer, which God hath set before us; let us follow this excellent Guide, by laying hold of the Remedy, which he found so successful in the Day of Visitation:—Let our Conduct be such here, that we may not be afraid of appearing Face to Face before God in Eternity.—And, let us so inure our Minds to those faint Visions of him, which we can only attain to in this Life, that we may be found worthy to be admitted into the blessed Vision of him in the next, when "in his Presence there shall be Fullness of Joy, and at his right Hand Pleasures for evermore."—

Now to God the Father, &c. &c.

X

(No. 24th) 3d Chapter, 1st Epistle Peter, Verse 16th.

“ Having a good Conscience; that whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil Doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.”

St. Peter in this Chapter is very warm in recommending the amiable Qualities of Compassion, brotherly Love and Pity,—and affectionately tells us, as an honest Advocate for peaceable Society, that he, who would wish to see good Days, must keep his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile; urging it, at the same Time, as much better to suffer Persecution in a good Cause,—than to give Way to the Threats and stern Looks of wicked Men;—for, “ who,” says he, “ can harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good,—having a good Conscience; whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil Doers,—they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.”—So they may,—

Can there be any Thing in human Nature?—Any Thing in Life that shows the Man more abandoned to Malice?—A Man who can catch at every Word that falls from the Lips of unguarded Innocence,—and handle it in the worst Way,—contriving how he may do it in the most effectual Manner to ruin his Reputation,—is a Character of the basest Degree.—The Serpent that only stings when injured is not so much to be feared,—this,—unless by accident, we may easily avoid.—But the Man=Adder, if I may call him so, is dangerous to meet,—dangerous to converse with,—dangerous to see;—nay if he has only heard of you, if to your Praise, his Envy must be snarling.—He is so full of himself,—so consequential in his own Eyes, that another Man's Merit disgusts him,—and to praise any Person, but himself, is to offer him the greatest Insult.—But, let me ask,—What must a good and an honest Man's Ideas be of such a Monster;—is a Monster he must be?—And particularly when he

himself is the Mark of his Vengeance,—the Butt of his ill-grounded Spite;—and the Aim of his false and malicious Accusation?—His Ideas and Actions are truly those of a good Man indeed,—he returns not Evil for Evil, nor Railing for Railing; but bears his Envy with Composure,—and is only distressed to think that Satan has him too much in his Power, for any effort that might be made in Behalf of his Redemption to be effectual.—Some may call this stupid Indolence, mean spirited, or Cowardice.—But be this as it may,—I will venture to affirm it, such a Spirit as will render the Man generally respected here, and will infallibly carry him triumphant into that Kingdom, where all Malice shall cease, and Envy have an End;—where he shall receive that Reward due to his Merit, at the right Hand of God,—and where he shall see him, who unjustly reviled the Just, doomed to perpetual and irreversible Misery.—Who then of Reason will not condemn the one, and laud, magnify and carefs the

other?—The one is Piety upon Earth.—The other worse than a roaring Lion going about seeking whom to devour.—Since then, my beloved, such is the Case, and since 'tis too much a Certainty there are such Men;—we ought to be very careful how we walk,—what we say,—and how we do;—then for Example's Sake, let us be as far from speaking, as doing Ill.—He is not only the honest Man, who pays ^{his} just Debts;—we are indebted to the Laws of our Country for this, and therefore there is Something of much more Consequence still wanting to complete this amiable Character:—He that robs me of my good Name is to me a much greater Villain, than he, who attacks me on the Road, and takes only my Purse. What is this? 'tis Trash,—'tis Something,—Nothing,—'twas mine,—'tis his,—and has been Slave to thousands; but he, who pilfers from me my good Name, robs me of that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed.—Aye, 'tis is the Robber,—the King of Robbers, that is the vilest

Thief, and most to be feared;—and a Pity it is that the Laws of our Country does not render it an equal, if not a worse Crime, with that of taking Life.—Life may be a Ransom for Life:—But what can ransom, a Reputation, on which perhaps depended the Support of many?—Can the Life of one Individual equal this, or be a Recompence for it.—No,—this would be but a poor Return, and feeble Satisfaction.—What then?—God only knows, therefore it must be left to him, who is alone able to judge of it,—and who, we are sure, will not pass over it in the Day of Trial.—Then we shall see the Justice of God exercised upon the sinful Man,—we shall see the Haughty brought low, and the Headstrong tamely governed with the Curb of Righteousness, praying for Mercy; but behold it is too late,—he shall look to those for Assistance, whom he once despised, reviled and abused;—but, dreadful Thought! It cannot be granted.—Now he is taught to know, what an ill Disposition, and a false malicious

Temper has procured him.—All the Pains he took to injure his Neighbour, has at last fallen with double Weight upon his own Head,—and the Burthen is intolerable, more than he is able to bear;—he seeks for Shelter, but can find none.—Let us then, without Delay, extract this destructive,—this poisonous Weed of Defamation from our Breasts;—he who possesses the least Sprig of it, is sure to possess a bad Heart.—They who are harmless and innocent can have no Gratification this Way; but it ever arises from a Neglect of what is laudable in a Man's Self:—Little Minds can never see their equals with Patience,—they must be backbiting if they speak;—and what gives them the greatest Pleasure upon Earth is to listen to the little Tales of ill Report, and to assist the Story in its Progress.—Was it not for the Pleasure of speaking Scandal, there are many who would never stir Abroad, nor open their Lips in Conversation.—But alas! how wretchedly low and contemptible are Minds of this Stamp,—void of Truth,—void.

of Honor,—void of Feeling,—nay, void of every Thing that is truly valuable or praise-worthy in a Christian;—Yes, Christianity holds out a different Language;—we are here recommended to follow after Peace,—for our Saviour himself assures us, that “Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God;”—a pleasing Assertion to a good Mind, and which cannot fail to produce good Effects, because he is well assured if he goes on in so virtuous a Course he shall prosper;—for what can possibly be more amiable in a Man, than the Desire of moderating Disputes between Man and Man?—if he is candid in his Reasonings, he is respected and honored;—if impartial in his Determinations he is generally and justly beloved, and his Acquaintance, though despised by some, yet is courted by all the generous Part of the World;—whereas he, who embitters and envenoms Disputes, and blows the Coals of Contention, is fit only for the Society of the lowest Rabble, who refuse to be taught the

Duty of a Christian, and such, who, if our Eyes did not convince us to the Contrary, we should dispute to be Men;—for their Conduct,—their Manners,—and their Actions, set them much below the Level of the Brute Creation;—they talk of Honesty, yet are Strangers to it;—they talk of Gratitude, yet know Nothing of it;—Mischief is what they delight in,—and indeed this is all they shine in;—can they expose a Man's Foibles, they rejoice to do it, and imagine they have done something very great, provided it tends to the Ruin, and destroys the Happiness of his coming Years;—Would to God, that he who ranks himself in the Class of Christians, would only consider how much these mean Arts are below the Dignity of his Profession, and that the Character of a Man is too precious to be played with, more so if his Living depends upon a good Name;—no Man is so happy as to be discreet at all Times,—it is hereditary to his Nature to have his unguarded Moments;—and are we, ungrateful Men, to take

Advantage of these Moments?—this would betray the vilest Ingratitude,—and he who is capable of such Treatment to his fellow Creature, must be void of all fellow Feeling, and Christian Charity, which is so far from feeding the Flame of Reproaches and Evil-speaking, that it obliges us to draw a Veil over the Faults, and even screen the very Indiscretions of others.—Were we thus affected one towards another, there would then perhaps be some Sparks of Holiness discoverable in us, and some Glean of Hope of recovering, as it were, this new Sodom, was a vicious and ill-disposed Man, ever sensible of the inward Pleasures of a good Mind;—I am clear he would soon quit his abandoned Practices, and seize on those Pursuits, which alone will make him respectable in the World, and agreeable to the Eye of Heaven;—he would soon loath the Husks which he now seems delighted with, when he had once tasted the true Kernel of Honesty, and a good Conscience.—

Let us then, my beloved, for my beloved you are,—let us

seriously examine our Hearts, and where we find any Filth, let us carefully wipe it away.—Let our Conversation be in the blessed Jesus, who died a Martyr for us, and suffered the most bitter Reproaches for our Sakes;—thus we shall soon prove ourselves of a good Conscience, and the Sons of Peace; our Study will then be to work out our own Salvation, and to further the Salvation of others, and we shall soon be weary of spinning our fine NETS, merely, as it were, to catch FLEES.—If a divine Life once takes Root in us, our Hearts will every Day increase in brotherly Affection, and the maintaining of quiet Neighbourhood;—this would make us open our Arms to the whole Creation, and smooth the sullen Brow and peevish Look; this would render us benign and obliging to all Conditions of Men,—and restore to the World the Golden Age of the primitive Christians, when the Disciples of Christ were so conspicuous, that it became a Proverb,—“see how the Christians love one another.”—Nay, this would make us rejoice to

contrive the Benefit and Advantage of the Poor and Indigent, the best Employment of Man;—if we feed the Hungry, and cloath the Naked, it shall be restored to us many-fold.—A poor Man, merely because he is poor, should not by any Means have the Reproaches of the Rich, though he is poor: he may be honest, and “an honest Man’s the noblest Work of God.”—The Worth of a Man does not consist in Wealth, but in his Conduct;—if Fortune has been liberal in her Gifts, and he shamefully abuses her Blessings given him on purpose to distinguish himself, he had much better been without them.—Let then, as it greatly behoves them, let the Rich be ready to distribute,—let the Learned be willing to instruct,—let the Poor be kind and obliging,—and let the Illiterate be anxious for Instruction, and then that hypocritical Temper, which reigns too much in the World, shall inevitably give Way to a better Spirit,—and we shall prove ourselves, what we ought to be, Men of good Consciences, and ashamed to speak

Evil of others, or falsely accuse their good Conversation in Christ.—May then what has been said sink deep into our Hearts;—let us not, like a Man beholding himself in a Glass, who immediately forgetteth what Manner of Man he was;—let us not return Home, and remember no more the Words we have heard,—but let us impartially examine ourselves according to the golden Rule of the Gospel, whereby we shall see clearly what Manner of Men we are, and what kind we ought to be, and thus we shall have a fair Opportunity of correcting and amending what we may find amiss.—Which that we may all do, God grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Holy Ghost, &c. Amen.

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(No. 25.) 10th Chapter Acts, 34th Verse,

“ Peter opened his Mouth, and said, of a Truth I perceive
that God is no respecter of Persons.”

No,—to think otherwise would be absurd and ridiculous;
for what other Opinion could a reasonable Creature form of a
God,—a Creator, and a Redeemer, an Almighty Judge
both of Heaven and Earth:—Had St. Peter not been better
convinced by clearer Means, yet, I think, his own Reason was
sufficient to bring him to this Conclusion:—Tis a strange
Infatuation!—That Men could ever suppose, that the God of
Nature confines his kind Regards to one small Sect of Men
on Earth:—Was this the Case,—we might well accuse
Heaven of unjust Dealings, and sit down very discontent
and unhappy;—knowing, that though we fulfilled the whole
Law, yet if we were not born the Chosen of God, we were
inevitably lost:—Absurd and superstitious Notion!—Yet
such were the Prejudices of the Jews against all the Rest of

the World, that they called themselves the elect,—the chosen,—the peculiar People of God, for whose Happiness alone he was concerned:—All, who did not exactly comply with the Ceremonies of the Law of Moses, were stiled by them the Children of Wrath,—Aliens from the Life of God,—reprobate Sinners of the Gentiles,—and refused to have the least Intercourse with them:—With great Reluctance they were brought to acknowledge, even after our Saviour's Ascension, that the Gentiles should be partakers with them in the christian Dispensation: But this was made evident and clear to St. Peter in his Vision; he was miraculously admonished not to call any Thing common or unclean, which God had cleansed; but to go to Cornelius the Roman Centurion, though then a Heathen, and initiate him into the christian Communion;—which immediately brought him to this obvious Conclusion, "that God is no respecter of Persons."—Obvious indeed,—but still make it, if possible, more evident, it was particularly re-

vealed to St. Paul, who in an especial Manner was permitted the Conversion of the Gentile World:—Hence he stiles himself the Apostle of the Gentiles; and justly was he thus called, for he has been very industrious to prove, through all his Epistles, that the Heathens were equally entitled to the christian Privileges with the Jews, seeing they professed their Faith in Christ;—Our Saviour represents the Murmuring of the Jews in a very striking Way in his Parable of the Vineyard: The Jews, because they had been exposed to the Discipline and Hardships, as they were pleased to imagine, of propagating the Knowledge of the one true God, thought they had a Right to better Privileges than the Gentiles, who had indulged themselves in every Pleasure, and had for so long a Time worshipped false Gods:—This is represented by bearing the Burthen and Heat of the Day, they could not think they had justice done by being made only equal with those, who came at the eleventh and last Hours:—But where in

all this is there Cause for Murmur? Where is the unjust Dealing?—Had not they received their just Recompence of Reward? Most certainly,—and as certainly Almighty God had an equal Right to deal with the Gentiles likewise, which St. Paul has proved by strong and conclusive Arguments. If God declared the Posterity of Jacob to be his chosen and peculiar People; he did it before Jacob was born, and therefore it could not be on Account of their own Merit; for then he had done neither Good nor Evil.—It is thus evident, as the Election of the Israelites was an Act of God's good Grace, Bounty or Favour; so he had an equal Right to adopt the Gentiles, and appoint them to the christian Church, though they were formerly very unprofitable:—This is what St. Paul means by grafting the Branches of the Olive Tree, which were wild by Nature, into the good Olive.—True, he says, in another Place, "Has not the Potter power over the Clay to make one Vessel to honor or dishonor?"—Yet this has no Relation to the

future State of Men; but to the clearer Manifestations of God's Will to them here.—The whole Gentile World, under the Mosaical Dispensation, were said to be reprobated and Vessels of dishonour. But doubtless, if St. Paul had not assured us, common Sense affirms, that those, who were under the Law of Moses, shall be judged by that Law; and those, who knew not that Law, shall be judged by the Law of their own Minds or natural Conscience.—Men are born with different Abilities for acquiring Knowledge; witness the Idiot, incapable of Improvement, and him of the most subtle Genius,—and shall we imagine that the Judge of all will require the same Improvement from the Idiot, as from the Man of sound Reason and Understanding,—it might be as reasonably urged, he would demand the same from Men, as from Angels:—But if we have any adequate Ideas of Justice this is absolutely inconsistent; if we have not, we can have no rational Dependence upon the Assertions, Promises, or

Threatenings of divine Revelation:—Give me leave then to affirm that " of a Truth God is no respecter of Persons: " — At this Day there are vast and populous Nations that are still ignorant of the Doctrines of Christianity:—But shall we, on this Account, foolishly conclude, that God is not concerned for the Happiness of these, as well as for the christian World?—Or shall we still more absurdly conclude that God Almighty flints his benevolent Designs to any one Sect or Party of Christendom,—God forbid;—let Men conscientiously learn and practise the Duties known, and they may rest well assured of being accepted of a good and merciful God.—Cornelius the Centurian had, to his Faith in God, added Virtue,—a Virtue essential to every good Man,—by the Messengers he is called a just Man;—and certainly he was a Man of the strictest Equity and Justice, or where would have been the Value of his seeming Piety? Can we love a God of infinite Justice,—can we truly express an Esteem and Veneration for this perfect Being

in our Devotions without loving Justice.—Fraud, Circumvention, and Injustice, are an infallible Proof, that we neither love nor fear God, as we ought;—and if we pretend to worship God, as having no Regard to Justice, in his Creatures, we do not in Reality worship him, but a Creature of our own Imagination;—for Justice is an essential Part of his Character;—and therefore, without it, he could not be a God of adorable Perfections. We all know how necessary Justice is among Men in general.—Were the Fruits of our Labour,—were our Property and Possessions at the Mercy of Villains,—what a Scene of Confusion would present itself? The Description fails me, and Conception itself is lost;—but to remedy this, in some Degree, we feel the Necessity of human Laws to punish.—Will not then a Being of infinite Goodness require us to abstain from all Manner of Evil;—and this not only through Fear of the Punishment of the civil Magistrate,—but also for the Sake of Conscience?—Most certainly.—It

follows then, that we should strictly observe this golden Rule, (viz.) "to do by others, as we would that Men should do by us in like Circumstances."—Do we approve of being imposed upon in an unguarded Moment, or of an Abuse of that Confidence we reposed in another? Do we not feel a just Indignation against that Person, who would take Advantage of our Inexperience,—Weakness,—or generous Confidence?—We may smother our Resentments, where Exclamation would be an indirect Accusation of ourselves;—but this is very different from approving it.—What can be more vile and diabolical than, like Birds of Prey, to soar about to trap an unguarded Innocence? What mean Artifices,—what Disimulation,—what falsifying the Truth must he enter into, who lies in wait to deceive? How contemptible the Life, which depends upon the debasing every Thing that is great and amiable in Man? Who would not rather exert the Body to earn a small Subsistence, than sink the Soul into this

abject Slavery? Nay, who can think a Life worth preserving, which subsists only by preying upon Truth and Innocence? If he more than lives, he feasts on the Vitals of others, or like the ravenous Wolf, gorges himself with innocent Blood. So horrid is Villainy! so amiable is Justice! It was, therefore, no small Recommendation to God and Man, that Cornelius was just,—can it then be supposed that Cornelius would adjudge himself free from all Obligations to Justice; because he had embraced the christian Faith? Had St Peter told him that Faith in Christ, and applying his Merits was the only requisite to Salvation, under the christian Covenant? Would not this have disgusted the virtuous Soul of the honest Heathen? Might he not have justly retorted, that such a Religion is unworthy of Perfection? How absurd then is that Doctrine of Salvation by Faith alone? For on what Account could our Saviour and his Apostles so strictly enjoin the Practice of every moral Duty;—but because they all availed in Part towards

our Salvation in Christ.—The Texts of St Paul, which the Calvinists build upon, are Nothing more, than where he is contending against the Jewish Converts, to prove, that the Heathens have an equal Right to be admitted to all the Privileges of the christian Church, even without the Works of the Law, provided they professed their Faith in Christ.—By the Works of the Law, St. Paul evidently means, the Sacrifices, Circumcision, Distinction of Meats, Purifications, Festivals, &c. These the Jews called Customs;—this middle Wall of Partition, which severed the Jews from the Gentiles, under the Law of Moses, St. Paul assures us, was done away in Christ.—There is now, therefore, neither Greek nor Jew,—neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision,—Barbarian nor Scythian,—Bond nor Free;—but Christ is all in all;—i. e. no one Nation hath any Pre-eminence over another in the Church of Christ,—old Establishments are passed away, and all Things are become new.—And seeing now the Gentiles

had an equal and a just Right with the Jews to the christian Privileges, which is very reasonable;—let me ask, were they under less Obligation to practice Virtue, than when they were Jews or Heathens?—Would their Faith in the Merits of Christ compensate for their habitual following Injustice, Cruelty, and Intemperance.—God forbid, that we should impute such a Religion to him, who proceeded from the Bosom of the Father,—the God of eternal Truth and Rectitude!—We must think very unlearnedly to imagine that St. Paul, according to his Epistles, hath set aside all Obligations to Virtue in Christians;—Thus we grossly mistake his real Meaning,—for a God of infinite Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, and Mercy, would never Commission any to disannul the eternal Rules of moral Goodness;—and, therefore, God cannot but approve in his Creatures, what he makes the infallible Guide of his own Conduct.—While then, there is an infinitely wise and good God, the Object of our Faith and Hope:—The Essence of true

Religion, must consist in the Practice of Holiness, Benevolence, Truth, Justice, and Mercy;—this shews how well grounded that infallible Rule of our Saviour is, " at the last Day every Man shall receive according to the Deeds done in his Body, whether they be good or evil. Not every one that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter in that glorious Kingdom, but he that doth the Will of my Father, who is in Heaven."—This equitable Judge of all the Earth will render Tribulation and Anguish to every Soul of Man that doth Evil.—To the Jew, Gentile, Mahometan, and Christian; but Glory, Honor, and Peace to every Man that worketh Good, to the Jew, Gentile, Mahometan, and Christian.—Hence it is evident that God is no respecter of Persons;—but in every Nation, he that doeth Righteousness, and feareth him, is accepted of him. Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

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(No. 26.) 8th Chapter St. Mark's Gospel, Verse 36th.

"What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole
World and lose his own Soul."

To grasp at the Things of this World, without any
Regard to the Blessings of Futurity, is a Conduct of the
lowest Degree.—A Conduct that was condemned by all the
pious Men that ever lived, and strenuously seconded by our
Saviour himself; and certainly the most Covetous, must
acquiesce in the same Opinion, if he presumes to acknowledge
himself an Heir of Immortality, and a Candidate for a
better Life.—It is a Truth universally received, and, alas!
too often experienced, that earthly Objects have a powerful
Ascendency over the Heart of Man.—We are apt to
suffer them to surprise us,—we heedlessly give way to
their enchanting Allurements,—without weighing the Con-
sequence, or ever thinking of the final Event,—and thus

they mislead the Judgment,—usurp over the Affection, and infatuate the Will.—Pleasure,—Pride,—and Interest,—wait at every Avenue, and seize the first Opportunity to engage our Attention;—If Pleasure is the Pursuit,—the Enchantress quickly follows,—makes good her Opportunity, and it is ten to one she makes us captive to her Will.—What repeated Examples have we of many young Men hastening to certain Ruin, merely through complaisance to some well-bred Pleasure-pursuing Libertine,—in whose Company he good-naturedly gives way to mimic the Great,—till Custom prevails, and at length brings him to join the Prophanes! Alas! too many in this Situation have been for ever undone;—how carefully therefore ought Parents to watch over the Actions of their Children, on which depends the Happiness or Misery of an immortal Soul?—It can never be too soon to inculcate into the human Breast serious Notions of a God and his Religion.—If Pleasure,—Pride, Interest enters first,—any one of them, even singly, is

bad to eradicate;—for these being the leading Motives to temporary Joys, if they are once tasted,—generally leave such a Relish behind, that the Indulger seldom finds Resolution enough to try the true Taste of a religious Life.—This many a Profligate has already experienced, and will still continue to experience, where Heaven candidly allows him Time to reflect, and does not summon him at a Moment's Warning:—And, how dreadful must a momentary Summons be to an unprepared Soul? The very Idea is alarming.—What then must reality be?—Here all the World is a Trifle, and a Man in this Situation, would be ashamed to offer such a Trifle, which just now was his darling Aim, for so valuable a Gem as immortal Life;—a Life he has refused to purchase,—till in return he is refused the Offer;—and thus by fondly pursuing worthless Pleasures, he gives up his precious Soul to eternal Misery and Death.—Can Mortals see this and yet be stupidly blind to their own substantial Interests?—

If we consider,—this World affords Nothing real,—Nothing worth living for,—is full of Troubles and Perplexities, and does not in the least claim our Esteem or Affection:—For, “we are even born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.”—Yes, Troubles will haunt the most tranquil Breast;—there is no Man without his Share of them, and sufficient to embitter all the Pleasures on Earth.—What Numbers are this Moment labouring under the almost intolerable Burthen of a diseased Body, and dragging on a Life they have been long weary of, in a continual Round of Pain?—How many are sinking under the Weight of Poverty and hard Labour,—and the keen Anguish of the Mind.—Nay, tell me, do tell me where to find the happy Man?—Where is the tranquil Mind unruffled by any Storms of Passion?—Where the sound Heart that is proof against all the Stings of Envy, Malice, and Disappointment?—No where on this side Heaven?—Even the most gilded State we behold here is pregnant with Pain

and Sorrow.—Indeed, there are some, who seem to be an Exception to all this,—but let me tell you, it is no more than the Shadow of Reality, and bare Appearance only.—Look at the Man, whose every Day seems to present him with fresh Delights;—who basks in a continual Sunshine of Prosperity, —and scarce ever tastes the bitter Cup.—This is what seldom happens,—but admitting its Possibility,—I would ask,—Is he not an intellectual Being;—a Being designed for an eternal State?—Then it would be absurd to imagine that all the Pleasures that this World has to bestow, can ever yield him true Satisfaction.—He is only placed here to prepare himself for a better State:—Therefore if he had the whole Earth in Possession,—all its gay Temptations would prove infinitely too little for the Purchase of his Heart.—This can never fill the extensive Views of an immortal Spirit.—Hence why should we value the Things of this Life, and suffer them so often to divert us from Things of greater Moment;—Things

every one may purchase if he pleases, and which, when obtained, will afford him more real Pleasure than the narrow Compass of human Ideas can possibly conceive, and which too are infinite.—Who then, at the Risque of so valuable a Treasure, will neglect a Pursuit that directly leads to it?—Who in his right Senses will dare thus to rebel against himself, and unwisely swerve from eternal Preservation.—In Comparison with this,—what are Riches,—Learning,—Honors,—Power,—nay, “ what shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?”—and pray, “ what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?”—Is the Weal of a Soul, which must live for ever, either in perpetual Bliss or Misery,—is it to be foolishly bartered for temporary Blessings, though never so refined,—Blessings, which at best are founded on a sandy Bottom, are brittle,—precarious,—and of short Duration.—Seventy Years will make sublunary Joys “—” upon the strongest Appetite,—and make the Man of

Pleasure look back upon himself with Horror and Confusion.—
Reflection sickens him, and he curses the deluding Syren that
thus betrayed him;—says he, “ what Signifies all the sweetest
Odors of Prosperity, or the overflowing Plenty which I have
sadly abused;—by taking Care of these, I forgot my God,
and all Things absolutely and essentially necessary to true Happi-
piness;—had he cut me off in the Midst of my Revellings,
he only knows my then Condition, and I am even now left
to the Goodness of his Mercy.—What is it I would not give?
What is it I would not do for his favour?—Did the Profligate
only see as I do, the World would bear a very different Face,
he would not thus spend so many Days and Years in open
Rebellion against his God.”—Thus he reasons, and as every
wise, serious, and thinking Man must reason likewise;—
for “ all Flesh is as Grass, and the Glory of Man as the
Flower of Grass.—The Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof
falleth away;”—and as Job expresses himself;—“ M.

cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a Shadow and continueth not."—Shewing that as a Flower, though more excellent and beautiful than the Rest of the inanimate Creation, yet it is liable to be blasted in its Bud,—cropped in its full Bloom,—or of itself naturally droops and fades away: So does Man, who far surpasses the animal World, either fall a Prey in puerile Youth, to the relentless Hand of Death, having scarce yet tasted the Cup of Life,—or is cut down in the Midst of the active Strength of Manhood;—or if he sees the Winter of his Days, (a Season of Sorrow and Infirmary) he must give Way to Time, and, in Spite of the strongest Efforts to prop him up,—wither,—decay,—and perish.—Since then, this Life is so precarious, even that of the best Man upon Earth, and must one Day perish;—how ought we to prepare ourselves for a better?—and when we consider this,—is it not a strong

argument, for our extending our Ideas to those serene Climes

above, unclouded with Pain, Guilt, or Sorrow? If we are convinced that Mortality must waste, and this World be dissolved;—Should not we have the greatest Regard to that Part of us, which must live for ever?—and from the same Reason,—should we not heartily despise all earthly Temptations, as only insinuating Traitors,—offering in Hand a few worthless, glittering Jewgans, at the Expence of all that Immortality holds dear,—even our precious Souls?—When we secretly and seriously ruminate on the Happiness of Heaven,—when we meditate on the transcendent Glories of Futurity,—and compare them with temporary Enjoyments, doubtless, all that we enjoy and see around us, in this comparative View, will share little of our Esteem or Regard. —Revelation tells us, to which we are much indebted, that Heaven is not a Place, frail, imperfect, and momentary; —but an Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;—Where Sin and Folly cannot enter, and

where Nothing exists but immaculate Holiness and unblemished Honor.—Here we shall not be subject to the arbitrary Laws of Mortality, but by a firm and indissoluble Tenure, hold for ever what we are once admitted to possess;—here our Pleasures will ever satisfy, but never cloy;—our Glory shall be at the height, but not diminish;—and our Happiness mature, full and perfect, yet never decay,—be always beginning and shall never end.—Is not this then a State devoutly to be wished for? Let the most abandoned Mortal living reflect on this,—and tell me if his decaying Soul, does not revive at the Thought,—raise its declining Head,—and rush onwards to the Mark of such Perfection of ecstatic and consummate Felicity;—he surveys his past Life with Shame, and thinks on it with Pain and Grief;—he curses the dire Effects of evil Company, and is shocked at his once darling Delight;—his whole Wishes turn now upon that Kingdom, where he humbly Hopes, " he shall see God, and shall over

be with the Lord,"—and where he shall share of the glorious Enjoyments of God in Christ, through endless and immortal Ages;—the Thought is grievous when he considers, at how insignificant, how mean and paltry a Price, he once offered to barter his better Self;—and he clearly sees how little the World would profit him, even if he should gain the whole of it, at the enormous Expence of his dear and precious Soul.—For Heaven's Sake, then, my beloved, and for the Sake of yourselves, resolve, with God's assisting Grace, to set a true Value upon that Part of you, which must live for ever;—remember you have yet the Reins in your own Hands, and may turn them at will, either along the broad Way that leadeth to irreverfable Mifery, or through the ftrait and narrow Gate that leadeth to Life.—If you call yourselves rational Men, if you profess yourselves faithful Adherents to Christianity, pray do not violate the one or the other, by deviating from honest Truth,—by flying in

the Face of Honor and Religion,—or by cowardly, basely, and cruelly stabbing Innocence in the Dark;—a Practice too much in Vogue among the Young and Thoughtless;—and which is, in Reality, nothing less than opposing Daggers to their own Souls, and preparing them for all the Torments of Eternity;—Eternity, which is even now at Hand, and we have not the least Security for one future Moment of our Lives;—the very next may be our last, and be decisive of all that is worth living for.—Be not then indifferent;—you will find this unpardonable Madness,—and that true Wisdom consists only in fervent Zeal;—by this Conduct, you will joyfully hear the Summons that calls you to the Bar of infinite Justice and Mercy;—where you shall be tried and acquitted before Millions of Angels with Honor;—and thus having prudently preserved your Souls, you shall enter without Delay “into the Joy of your Lord;”—to whom with the Son and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. Amen.

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(No. 27.) 8th Chapter Romans, Verse 14th.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."

Many are the Methods by which Men worship God,—many are the Ways they pursue,—and many are the Roads which lead astray,—which makes it a Duty incumbent upon me to lay before you the true Way that leadeth to Life, and shew who are the Men that may be justly stiled the Sons of God.—If you look into the 10th Chapter St. Luke, you will find that our Saviour made choice of Seventy of his Disciples to go out by two and two into the Cities and Villages to preach the Word and exhort to Salvation;—commanding them to take Nothing with them, for the Labourer, he pronounced, was well-worthy his Hire;—and particularly at a Time when the Harvest was so immensely great, and the Labourers so very few.—On this Commission they went, and were successful every

Way, in so much, that the very Devils were subject;—for which Duty our Saviour tells them to rejoice for “their Names were recorded in Heaven:”—Shewing, that through Faith and Obedience, in and to his Command, they were entitled to the Inheritance of Sons;—made Heirs of God’s most precious Promises,—and hence Co-heirs with Christ.—True, it is not to be expected that any will now be sent into the Lord’s Vineyard, inspired as they were, to speak and expound, for God gave them Tongues.—I say, it is not to be expected for many Reasons, but particularly, because the Cloud which then overshadowed them, is since happily removed,—and we see now not the Shadow, but the real Substance,—and we not barely guess at, but are well assured of a future Existence;—and we know also that through Faith only in the Works of our Saviour and his Apostles, we have a Right to be enrolled among the Sons of God,—or have any Title to the Blessings he has promised.—Those, therefore, who entertain a lively Faith in

the Gospel,—are certainly led by the Spirit of God,—and are such alone, who bear any visible Right to the Name of Sons:—To be then of this Denomination is what every Man must covet;—and to be so in Reality must be a Matter of true Joy and Exultation,—and to be sensible of it must render Life easy and comfortable, even in the worst Condition.—The most affluent State can never afford Half the Enjoyment;—for here, though we are “as dying, yet behold we live,—as chastened, yet not killed,—as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing—as poor, yet rich,—as having Nothing, and yet possessing all Things.”—What would signify then all the Riches of this World, if we were not the Chosen of God.—What Consolation can it be to him, who can only say,—“I live in Affluence, I enjoy Abundance,”—and who, when he ruminates upon his Goodness, is still in Doubt whether he would be acceptable at the Throne of Mercy.—Such a Reflection would doubtless embitter all his Joys.—A Fear much less than this will oft Times greatly

alarm us, and render us extremely sad and melancholy;—
and what then shall we think of him, who has Nothing left
to fear than eternal Misery after Death, and yet cannot
promise himself a Moment of Life.—His Situation must be
truly deplorable, and such as must strike the most obdurate
Sinner with Dread.—But I would hope this is not a com-
mon Case:—Yet too many are the Men, I fear, who are
strangely apt to flatter themselves in Regard to their spiritual
Condition, and often impose upon themselves by indulging a
Hope of Salvation without sufficient Grounds.—They think
they know their Duty, and because they know it, they have a
Right to neglect it.—They indulge several Vices;—gratify
their Passions right or wrong;—follow Inclination,—and still
fancy themselves the Children of God;—Men of this Stamp
are generally those, who make a Point of introducing religious
Affairs over their Cups;—a very bad Season for religious
Controversies,—and a second Mark is,—that these Men

seldom or never attend divine Service;—and what can be the Preventative?—A self-conceited Opinion of their own Worth and Knowledge;—and a natural Propensity to indulge Folly;—and if such Men are so presumptuous as to believe themselves led by the Spirit of God;—let them take careful Heed, lest they, through a mistaken Notion, find themselves from a stricter Enquiry, barely the Sons of Belial:—And as some Men thus fancy themselves to be in a real State of Salvation when they are not;—so there are those of the other, but better extreme, who think themselves not so, when they really are;—and these are such, who, through a weakly Habit of Mind, are terrified into morbid Melancholy, by the Ignorance and merciless Disposition of those Preachers, who condemn all Men, save themselves, and vainly imagine they are the peculiar and only favourites of God; but if such would listen to more reasonable and merciful Teachers, they would have just Cause to rejoice in their Situation,—and find, that

though God had brought them into a Vale of Misery, yet he had not forgotten to be gracious to his Servants, nor would he leave them without sufficient Marks, that they were the Children of his Affection,—that “their Names were written in Heaven,” and their Transgressions were cleansed with the Blood of that immaculate Lamb, which was spilt for Sinners in general;—However he may be pleased to prove and try Men in this State, yet if they hold fast their Integrity, he will at last reward them with celestial Mansions;—The Way, that Men should convince themselves whether they are the Sons of God, is to consult their Consciences,—these will testify whether they have been diligent in what a Christian ought to believe and practise, whether they have been ^{more} rather desirous to serve the World, than Heaven,—whether the Articles of their Faith, and the Doctrines they have embraced are grounded upon Truth, and established upon clear Texts of Scripture,—and above all, whether they have been determined to serve God,

in spite of every disagreeable Consequence that might befall them at present,—If their Consciences tell them they are thus situated and determined, they may very reasonably hope for Salvation, and safely speak Peace to their Souls.—Thus it is evident, that all such are led by the true Spirit of God,—but some there are, who, under a mistaken Notion of Religion, rest upon Faith alone, as a perfectly saving Grace.—Indeed, Faith, as being the first Principle of Goodness, cannot be deemed totally Worthless, yet without Works, it is, according to the Apostle, accounted dead;—shewing that we must not only believe, but believe and do;—God has given us the Means, and as he never did any Thing in Vain, certainly he never endowed us with these Faculties to no Purpose;—consequently the firmest Faith, without Endeavours, can profit nothing.—The Conscience, also, of a good Man will testify that he is an Heir of Heaven;—it will shew him, he has not been negligent in his Duty;—that he has set God always before

him;—that he has espoused no enthusiastic,—pernicious Opinion,
—nor given Heed to the dangerous Doctrine of the Pope, full
of horrid Superstition, and contemptible Bigotry;—The Sup-
porters of which, must be either very ignorant, or very wicked
Men;—indeed, some of its Tenets, are very good,—yet the
Licences it gives, in other Respects, are such as never could
be the Dictates of Purity and Perfection, and such as no one,
who has his Eyes open, but a determined Sinner, would support.
—Let a Christian then know and believe that he can be
purified only through the Blood of the Lamb,—and that by
embracing Christ's Precepts, to the best of his Abilities, he is an
Heir of Glory.—When good Men, therefore, find themselves
longing after the Mansions above;—when their Delight is in
God;—when they earnestly seek the Society of the virtuous;—
and when they find themselves desirous to do benevolent and
generous Acts, they may rest well assured, that they are led
by the Spirit of God;—for, "as many as are led by the

Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."—A Sentence replet with Comfort,—certainly it must be pleasing to the last Degree when a Man can reflect and look back upon himself with Pleasure, and when upon a Survey of his past Conduct, he is comfortably assured, that he is an Heir of eternal Bliss and Glory.—A Man in this Situation is happy in every Circumstance of Life,—he knows that his Continuance here, at longest, is but short,—and wisely, therefore, prefers the one Thing needful, to all that a frail, deceitful, and an unstable World can bestow;—he thinks it perfectly sufficient to be for ever happy after Death;—and hence "he calls on the Name of the Lord, knowing that one Day he shall deliver him."—And what Man of Reason can wish for more?—If we labour in the Vineyard, we may rest assured of our Wages,—for we serve a rich and merciful Master,—one who is much more ready to pay, than we to labour and deserve.—Let us not, therefore, be unreasonable in our Exa

pectations,—let our Desires, be always conformable to our Deserts, and let us never tire in the Race that leadeth to Life;—but let us always press eagerly forward to the Mark of Salvation.—Know, the Condition of a Man in a State of Salvation, is of all Situations, incomparably the best;—if he lives in the sweets of Prosperity, his inward Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, gives him a proper and true Relish for every Enjoyment;—and if he treads the thorny Path of Adversity, he still has a well Spring of Life within him, that refreshes and comforts him, notwithstanding the Cup which he now drinks is mingled with many Bitters;—but yet we must not forget that it is absolutely Necessary for every Christian, however he may at present stand secure, “to take Heed lest he fall.”—Grace is a Talent to be improved, and not to be laid up in a Napkin;—he that is already good, must still endeavour to improve his Goodness.—A Child of God, may, by Negligence, soon become a Child of the wicked one.—Would

we then be, what God requires us to be? Then let us do what is lovely in his Sight,—let us endeavour to please him in every Step we take,—and let our Words and Actions be such, as will reflect Credit upon those from whence they proceed,—and when we reflect on the uncertainty of our State,—let us at the same Time consider, how little it belongs to us to be airy and unthinking,—gay and inconsiderate,—for should our Souls be immediately required of us, our Hope must then be totally blasted.—How does it behove us, therefore, to improve the precious Time we have left, and abandon our Vices and Follies.—A Soul is not to be trifled with,—yet no Sinner need despair of Pardon, if he enters into an immediate Course of Repentance, and uses his Time referred to the best Advantage.—God is a good and merciful Being; he delights not in destroying, but in saving Souls,—he has Grace in Abundance for those who sincerely seek him, though late,—and he will meet the returning Penitent with Favour

forgive his Misdeeds,—and embrace him with extended Arms of Mercy.—A most comfortable Assurance to an unhappy Sinner;—but without Repentance, nothing will do,—no high Professions,—no speculative Faith,—no Zeal for human Institutions,—nor Attachment to religious Parties,—nay, even ALL united are not sufficient, without an uniform Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel.—“Not every one, saith our Saviour, that faith unto me, Lord, Lord, &c. &c.—Let every one, therefore, who wishes to be a Son of God,—let him carefully do the Will of God,—and then neither Tribulation nor Anguish, —Peril nor Sword,—Hunger nor Nakedness, shall ever shake the Basis of his firm Foundation in the Lord, nor ever visibly disturb his Peace.—Now to God, &c.—Amen.

(No. 28.) 2d Chapter, 1st Epistle St. John, Verse 15th.

" If any Man loves the World, the Love of the Father
is not in him."

St. John here wishes to shew us the Insignificancy of the Joys of this World set in Competition with those of the next;—and his Ideas are very just and commendable; for how unnecessary,—nay how despicable are the Things, we here admire and covet, when we impartially ruminate upon true and rational Happiness? Hence, it becomes an indispensable Duty incumbent upon us to love the World only as it merits, and pay our greatest and most sincere Attention to nobler Objects, the Things above.—This will confirm our Affections for the Father, who sits on the Throne of Mercy, to reward his Servants as they deserve.—As Christians, therefore, we must meditate on sublime Things,—Things that are lasting and permanent;—that are productive of refined

Joys, and lead us to the Glories of a future State,—It is required of us to direct all the Faculties of our Mind, to contemplate these Things.—Our Judgment and Understandings must search them out, and endeavour rightly to conceive them:—Our Fancy must be modelled to desire, and all our Affections must be fixed on and terminate in them;—and unless a Man is thus determined, and thus conducts himself the Love of the Father cannot be truly said to be in him.—Let us not then fix our Minds upon the sordid Things of this transcient World; but let our Affections have a far superior Aim, so as to elevate us to a State that will last for ever.—God hath positively commanded us in many Parts of Scripture, to seek his Kingdom, to love him, and to follow his Righteousness; that we should have our Affections in Heaven, and turn all our Thoughts and Desires that Way; to convince us that our sacred Duty requires us to soar above the trifling Concerns of the World, and exercise our Minds with

the utmost Diligence on the Joys of Eternity:—Happy must the Death-bed be to him, whose Reflection tells him, that he is leaving the rapid Flashes of Delight here;—for the solid, perfect and perpetual Happiness of a better Life hereafter,—and that we are bartering only a fleeting, miserable State, to enjoy Blessedness for ever.—Is the Father of the Universe, and Author of our Being, worthy our Attention?—Nay tell me;—Is he not all powerful,—all merciful,—and able to exalt or tread down his Creatures in the Dust?—Then can we be better employed, than in the Contemplation and Adoration of the best and most perfect Being?—Is there any Rival to this?—In the Courts of the Lord's House are many Mansions,—here are true Contentment and perfect Satisfaction,—Springs that overflow momentarily with fresh and renewed Delights, which answer all Ends and satisfy all Appetites.—Look up to the Glory of Glories that is above;—how after a godly Life, you shall be made like unto God,—and live and dwell with him,

—there you shall be happy, as he is happy, and immortal, as he is immortal;—delightful Assurance! What does the World afford equal to this? What is there in it that can balance such exquisite Felicity?—Here your Hunger shall cease, and you shall thirst no more,—your Troubles shall have an End,—and all your Wants shall be satisfied.—Tell me, ye that make the Earth your Delight;—ye that try all its Sweets,—do you meet with any Pleasures likely to be everlasting,—Pleasures that shall neither change nor expire,—that shall be immortal as the Soul, and valuable as Heaven? If you do,—show where such Happiness is to be found,—and then depend upon it, we all with one consent will follow and pursue them:—But are the greatest Pleasures upon Earth, the Pleasures of Sin?—Alas! these like a Meteor blaze a while, and endure not;—these are short and fading, at best subject to Anguish and Remorse, and often attended with the sharp Convictions of a guilty Conscience.—These often expose us

to Poverty and Sickness;—shame and disgrace:—Where is the Worth then of earthly Joys? Let a wicked Life have all its Scope,—have all its Wishes gratified, and all its Pleasures multiplied to the utmost:—Yet the Joys of Heaven are still more solid and substantial,—far beyond the Reach of Thought, and glorious beyond all Report:—Let us then agree with Cicero, that honest Heathen, and say,—“If these earthly Things are of so little Value, leave them and aim at Heaven:”—Excellent Admonition, and from an Heathen too! Here we are advised to draw our Minds from all gross and sordid Views, and fix them upon rational and divine Things,—Consider, the Entertainments of Sense are not equal to our Natures,—the Dazzle of gay and gaudy Appearances were not meant for our first Amusements; but the Love of the Father of Heaven and Earth,—he certainly should be our chiefest Care.—Behold the devout Soul, breaths out Nothing but God,—thinks of Nothing else,—and seeks Nothing, but that Source

from whence it had its Beginning; and certainly the proper Employment of the Soul is to contemplate the Power,—the Majesty, and Wisdom of God;—to discover that Happiness which is prepared for it, and to acquire a Residence therein:—In short,—elevated Thoughts,—towering Imaginations,—Refinement and Purity of Mind, are the proper Employments of the Soul of Man, and such as are only proportionate to it.—The Soul that is once truly touched with the majestic Force of divine Love, can never relish any earthly Joys so pleasingly, as to rest entirely upon them.—Though the Pleasures, Profits and Honors of this Life may sometimes get the better, and turn us from our usual Course;—yet, if we possess a good Soul, we shall be ever restless, ever inwardly disquiet, till we return to our wonted Measures again.—All the oriental Lustres of the richest Gems, the most enchanting Colours, the harmony of Sounds, and the most ravishing Form and Order of all, shall not be able to satisfy us;—No, the

inward Man shall find no Happiness, till it points again at its true and only just Center, God the Father;—this is the Magnet that commands the good Heart, and teaches it to be careless about the World, and all its false deluding Charms.—We are but Pilgrims here,—here we have no continuing City, but seek one to come,—this is not the Place of our Rest;—hence the Consideration of our present frail Condition and future Hopes, should set us above the Fondness of this Life, and the slavish Fear of Death;—and when the Mind has fairly conquered these two Passions, and made them subject unto our Reason;—we may justly conclude, it is wound up to its proper Pitch and Elevation;—as for this Life, and its Enjoyments, what do we see in them, to make us so strangely doat upon them? This World can but at best gratify for a Moment the Appetites of the Body, or barely satisfy the Desires of a sensual Fancy,—therefore love it not,—but forget not to love and adore the Father, who after the Dissolution of the

vital Union of the Soul and Body, is able to confer Life and Happiness on both for ever;—'tis true, we are born in the World and live in it;—but consider, we belong (if I may be allowed the Expression) to another Society.—St. Paul tells us,—“ that we are fellow Citizens of the Saints, and of the Household of God.”—What then is our Duty, but to consider all earthly Things, as Travellers do the Conveniences they meet with in a foreign Land;—these delight them for a Time, but their Felicity rests at Home in their own Country.—Let us then place our Affections on that Place, from whence we came, where, if we merit, we shall dwell for ever, and receive a bounteous Reward, much beyond the Value of all the Riches of this narrow and transcient World.—But, my beloved, I mean not to persuade you to under-value the useful Things of the World, my Wish is, that you may not over-rate them.—Doubtless the Gifts of God, if not abused, are so many Blessings conferred upon us, which we ought thankfully to receive,—but they

were never meant to be our *SUMMUM BONUM*, or principal Good; i. e. we must not prefer them to the Glories of that World which is to come; we may enjoy earthly Comforts, but we must covet heavenly Blessings, and thus our Election will be sure. I grant, to wean ourselves entirely from the Love of the World, seems a hard Task; nay, almost an unsurmountable Labour, since our natural Propensities bend strongly and almost entirely this Way;—but what does Reason tell us? Even that we have a much greater Concern upon our Hands;—it informs us, our Stay here is but very short, and that too very uncertain;—and therefore, to traffic with the World more than needful, is to act diametrically opposite to our greatest Interests; for it is evident our best Hopes, the Hopes of eternal Pleasures, are from the Father of Mercy, through the Merits of Christ and in the Resurrection of his Body, which are the first Springs of Virtue and Religion; if it were not for these Hopes, the Life of a Christian would be of all others the most miserable; for of all others he is most exposed to

the Taunts and Injuries of the World;—and if we had not these Hopes in View, Man would be but an insignificant Creature;—But let me ask, was Man made in Vain? No surely, he was made for noble Purposes; not merely to eat and drink, and to revel without Controul; not to pursue the base and unworthy Gratifications of Vice and Sensuality; but to qualify himself for those Regions in Heaven, where Joys flow upon Joys for ever;—Upon these we ought to settle our Minds, and not upon the glittering Advantages of Fortune,—the Sound of Titles,—or the Distinction of Rank.—Alas! how fleeting are all the Joys of this transitory Life?—they are but an imperfect Dream,—they fade like a Flower,—and vanish like a Shadow;—for we well know, while we doat on Wealth, it makes itself Wings and flies away;—while on Greatness and Power, we know that this is but a Piece of empty and toilsome Pageantry, and often the Subject of Misery and dismal Tragedies;—and while we doat on Pleasure, we are well assured that

'tis dishonourable and short, and often intermixt with Shame and Disgrace;—nay, nothing here below is able to free our State from Calamity,—our Minds from Guilt,—our Bodies from Death,—much less the whole Man from a miserable Eternity.—Let us not then, my beloved, pamper the Flesh with luxurious Living, so as to forget the Father of Heaven, and banish all Thoughts and Care for our immortal Souls;—but let us pay a due and strict Regard to a future State, where we must live for Ever;—we have too long conversed with Trifles and Things of little Moment;—let us, therefore, delay no longer,—let us receive good Instructions deep into our Hearts, and not suffer them, as too many do, to float superficially upon the Mind;—but let us seriously, and frequently think of our Salvation;—I presume, we are all Candidates for a better World, than this we live in;—let us leave then the false, fleeting Pleasures of Life, and willingly change the Satisfaction of Brutes, for "

*Enjoyments of Angels,—that when we quit this earthly
Tabernacle, we may ascend into Heaven, and be seated at the
right Hand of the Father, whom our Actions here will
bear just Testimony, we have truly loved.—Now to God the
Father, &c. Amen.*

X

Easter Day.

(No. 29.) 1st Chapter, 1st Epistle Peter, Verse 3d.

"Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead."

St. Peter in the Beginning of this Epistle seems perfectly transported with the joyful News he was about to relate;—and who will not join in the Strain, that once considers, that the Resurrection of Christ has assured us of a State of eternal Happiness after this;—for "the Lamb that was slain, is risen to die no more;"—that "same Stone which the Builders rejected, is now become the Head of the Corner;"—and our most formidable Enemy Death is completely conquered;—so that we may justly exclaim, "O Death, where is now thy Sting? O Grave, where is now thy Victory?"

—The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law;—but Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ:—Through him, who is not only risen from the Dead, but become “the first Fruits of them that slept.”—Let it be the Business then of the following Discourse to shew the Certainty of the Resurrection of Christ, and further try to discover our own from the Connection the one has with the other.—The Prophets all of them predicted a Saviour, that should come into the World to cleanse the Corruption, and redeem the fallen State of Man.—That should be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, to be the Glory of the true Israelites,—and a stumbling Block to the Jews,—and did not Christ Jesus, in repeated Instances, prove himself to be all this?—Even in such a Manner as his most inveterate and opposing Enemies could not resist.—They acknowledged, “that no one was able to do such Things as he did, except God was with him.”—And further, to prove his Resurrection,—Was

not he well known among Men?—And could he possibly be forgot in a few Days, after being so long in the World?—Could a Man so followed,—so popular as he was,—who went about preaching,—disputing with the most learned,—and expounding the Scriptures, even to the Wonder of the World.—Could he, as it were in a Moment, be lost to the Recollection of Men, with whom he had been before his Crucifixion familiar?—'Tis impossible,—for how well will we often remember a Man we are but slightly acquainted with even for many Years, and who perhaps was still less known in the World.—Then it is certainly impossible that those, to whom our Saviour appeared after his Death, could be deceived in his Person,—those by whom he had been particularly known during his Stay upon Earth;—which was an Acquaintance of full thirty Years.—Hence, from these Preparatives, it cannot possibly be hard to prove the Reality of his Resurrection;—and for this the sacred Historians leave us such Records

as it is impossible for the most specious Arguments, or subtle Invention to evade:—They tell us, that at the Time our Blessed Lord burst open the Prison of the Grave, and sprung victorious from the Dead, that the whole Globe trembled, and became, as it were, convulsed,—and the Guards, at the Appearance of the Angel that removed the Stone from the Sepulchre, were struck motionless with Fear;—and well might they, for “his Countenance shone like the Lightening, and his Raiment was white as Snow.”—They further tell us, that at the joyful News, two of his Disciples, impatient for the Truth, hastened to the Sepulchre,—found the Linen in which they had wrapped him,—saw,—and believed:—But what will still doubtless obviate every Dispute, is his Appearance again upon Earth in his usual Form to considerable Numbers;—to Mary Magdalene,—his Disciples,—and the five hundred Brethren at once;—and was it possible they all could be deceived?—Was it probable they could forget him so soon?—Even in a few Days?

—By no Means.—To imagine so, would be sinking rational Creatures below the Level of the Brutes that perish; —for they in many Instances will remember much longer. —A Dog will sometimes know his former Master,—and fawn upon him Years after their Separation,—not to limit him to a few Weeks or Days.—To imagine then that our Saviour was an Impostor, when he appeared after his Burial upon Earth,—is to say, that Man is a poor,—stupid,—dull Creature, and void of that Reflection which very much adorns and dignifies his Nature.—He likewise appeared to his Apostles, and to convince them, says, “Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself.—Handle me, and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.”—Yet, notwithstanding this Testimony, one of their Associates still remained inflexible, and except “he put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his wounded Side,” he would not believe.—On which Account Jesu

seeing him a few Days after, made him this gracious Offer,
—" Reach hither," says he, " thy Finger, and behold my
Hands;—and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into
my Side, and be not faithless, but believing."—At which
evident Conviction, he was immediately struck with such a Sense
of Admiration, that he could not help exclaiming,—“ My
Lord, and my God.”—Thus the Truth of the Resurrection of
Christ is established upon the strongest Evidence; and therefore
I shall further endeavour to shew, that it is an infallible
Proof of the Resurrection of the whole human Race consequent
thereupon.—To this almost every Page in the New Testament
directly refers;—and particularly in the Writings of St.
Paul;—says he, “ If the Dead rise not, then is Christ not
raised—and if Christ be not raised,—then is your Faith vain,
ye are still in your Sins:—But now is Christ risen from
the Dead and become the first Fruits of them that slept.”—

Then it is clearly proved and evident, that Christ is risen

from the Dead;—and if St Paul was an inspired Writer;
—then it is unquestionably true, that Christ's Resurrection
was a certain Prelude to our own,—and that though " by
Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection
of the Dead,"—for " as in Adam all die, even so in
Christ shall all be made alive."—May I not, therefore,
confidently affirm with St. Peter, that " God through his
abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope, by
the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead?"—Yes, it is
without the least Shadow of Doubt, certain and clear, that we
are begotten, as it were, " to an Inheritance,—incorruptible,—
undefiled,—and that fadeth not away, eternal in the Heavens."
What a Comfortable Assurance!—The Hope of this is certainly
that living Bread, which came down from Heaven, of which
if a Man eat, he shall never die;—this is the Glory of God,
and our future Happiness, and which is only attainable
by an uniform Obedience to the Will of God; whose Mercy, it

we pursue, we are certain to obtain;—but if we fly from it, his Justice we cannot escape;—for “ God will not be mocked, and is of purer Eyes, than to behold Vice unpunished.”—Indeed how could we either expect, or even wish for him otherwise?—Could we desire more than we have already received?—We have the Reins of Happiness in our own Power, and may turn them as we please;—for the Son of God, by his Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection, has brought Life and Immortality to Light, he has left behind him an infallible Guide for our Conduct;—and therefore, if we are misled, 'tis our own Folly, and God, and his Proceedings are blameless.—Shall then all the Generations, that ever peopled the World? Shall they in a Moment's Time, in the Twinkling of an Eye, at the last Trump? Shall they shake off the leaden Slumbers of Death, and rise again to Life? Rise to die no more? Rise to a State of endless Pleasure, or of endless Pain?—Yes, this is a ~~unious~~ Truth we must not dare to dispute;—for hear what

Revelation declares, " All that are in the Grave shall hear his Voice, and come forth; they that have done Good to the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil to the Resurrection of Damnation."—Thus the true Believers in Christ, who have a just Sense of their Sins, repent and amend their Lives, and live in due Subjection to the Dictates of the Gospel, shall, at the second coming of our blessed Lord, receive a Crown of everlasting Life, as a just and promised Reward for their Fidelity.—Never hath Eye seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it ever entered the Breast of Man to conceive, what glorious Rewards are reserved for the Just in Heaven;—and they shall thus be welcomed into that incomparable Kingdom.

" Come ye blessed Children of my Father, and take Possession of that Inheritance, ye so long, and so well have deserved. With Pleasure I introduce you into these happy Mansions;—ye are those, who have done me every Honor in your Power;—ye have mortified your Passions, and, for my Sake, resist'

numberless pressing and even darling Temptations;—ye are those, who attended to the Cries of the Neceſſitous, and gently dried up the Tear from the diſconſolate Eye;—come then receive the Treasure ye have here laid up;—enter into the Kingdom that never can be ſhaken;—poſſeſs the Crown that can never fade;—and enjoy the Glory that never will decay.”

—Such, according to our faint and imperfect Ideas, will be the Language of our Saviour to all, who ſincerely love him.—

While the wicked, ſcarce ſummoned to the dreadful Tribunal, ſhall have this dreadful Sentence pronounced againſt them,—

“Go ye curſed into everlaſting Fire.”—Dreadful Cataſtrophe!

—Now, on hearing this, will they curſe the dear-bought Sweets of a perishing World?—Now, in all the Anguiſh and Bitterneſs of Soul, will they enter upon an Eternity of irreverſible Miſery and Torment?—To deſcribe it, 'tis impoſſible, and therefore, I ſhall leave it to your own private, and inward

Concluſions.—Is it true, then, my Beloved, that our Saviour

descended from Heaven,—took upon him a Body of Clay,—gave us the best Instructions that ever were wrote,—suffered a most ignominious Death for our Sins,—and, as on this Day, rose again for our Justification?—If all this is true, which, I hope, I have clearly expounded beyond the Power of Scrutiny,—or the Art of Misbelief?—How ought we then to consider the great Day of Resurrection?—How seriously should we look forward to that Time, when “this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality?”—And how carefully ought we to survey our past Life, amend what we find amiss, and “live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present World.”—This certainly is the best Employment of Man,—Remember, that God so loved you, that he sent his only begotten Son that you might not Perish, but have everlasting Life,—I beg then, you will not frustrate his gracious Intentions, by forfeiting your own Happiness for ever.—The Reins of Salvation are in yo

own Hands to use, as you please,—make good then this valuable Opportunity,—avail yourselves of this Moment, before the Curtain drops, and Time shall be no more.—Let your Conduct be invariably such, as will clearly shew, that you have a grateful and an heart-felt Sense of your being Heirs of Immortality, and the “Redeemed of the Lord.”—Now to God the Father, &c. &c. Amen.

7

(No. 30.) 6th Chapter Micah, Verse 8th.

"And what doth the Lord require of thee, O Man, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

In this short, but comprehensive Sentence, is contained the whole Duty of Man, and the Essence of true Religion.—Had the Christian World always attended to the Tenor of my Text, much,—very much of that Jargon and Contention which have so much harraised the Christian Church might have been happily avoided:—The Drift,—the Design of the Law and the Prophets was to inculcate into the Minds of Men, a Love of God and Man:—Would Men divest themselves of all Prejudice, and weigh Religion in the Scales of cool Reason, they would find, that the weightiest Parts of their Duty consisted in Humility, Justice and Mercy:—Our heavenly Teacher abounds in these Perfections;—and

therefore must evidently require us to do likewise.—Can any Thing be more clear than that the God of Justice and Mercy will require of us rational Creatures to exercise such amiable Virtues one to another.—Yet such is the Frailty and Perverseness of Men that we too often find they will exercise any Thing rather than what they ought.—A Monk in his Penances, which no Way better the Heart, will undergo greater Severities than might subdue the most inordinate Passion,—and inculcate the finer Affections of Truth, Probity, Benevolence and Compassion:—So prone are Mankind to lay the Strefs of Religion upon external Observances:—With what seeming Zeal will some Men contend for or against a particular Mode of Faith or Worship!—What Extacies in their Devotion! What Solemnity in their Attendance! Yet how often do we find that their Hearts are totally unaffected with it;—and with People of such a Character,—Virtue must be less, much less Consideration, than the Observances of

Sabbaths or other external Appointments of Religion.—Here Religion becomes a Fashion, and they practise it, because their Neighbours do likewise;—they have no natural Impulse to worship, and therefore it must be a fearful and a dangerous Thing to fall under the Mercy of such Beings,—for Mercy there can be none, where there is not a true Notion of Religion:—This humanizes the Passions, and tempers the Feelings of the Man.—Men devoid of this, are generally devoid of all Sense of Christian Charity, and know very little of the Justice, Goodness or Severity of a Deity.—But to shew the Worth of Mercy,—what was it that our Saviour answered the Pharisees when they rebuked him for eating with Publicans and Sinners? —Says he, “those who are whole need no Physician, but those who are sick;”—and then he bids them go and learn what that meaneth,—I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice:—Shewing that the Disposition of Men should be mild and gentle, candid and long-suffering,—free from the least Tint of

Anger and Revenge, and perfect Emblems of Humility and Mercy.—The cold Winter may forget to rain,—the Spring to shoot its Buds,—the parching Summer to dry up the Pools, and teeming Autumn, to give its Increase:—Yet a Man of such a Turn, such a Mind and Disposition shall always, have the same Influence,—he shall soar above the common World, and be a Pattern to present and future Ages.—So long as he lives his Heart shall never find room to reproach him, and his Memory, floating on the Wings of Fame, shall never die.—Let us not then foolishly neglect our great Duty both to God and Man;—let us not think that a bare Attendance of divine Service is sufficient to recommend us to the Favour of the Deity; but let the Sincerity of our Hearts correspond with the seeming Sanctity of our Actions;—remembering, that though the Sabbath was made for the Improvement and Benefit of Man, yet Man was made for the Sabbath; that is, the Institution of the

Sabbath was to impress and keep alive upon the Minds of Men, the Principles of Piety, Humility and Virtue.—Qualities which immediately tend to their real Happiness; and therefore worthy the Choice of every moral and intelligent Being.—To abstain from our secular Employments one Day in seven, and employ it in the Duties of Religion, was the express command of Heaven; without which every Man must have been left to his own Discretion and Conscience what Time must have been allotted to these Duties.—Let us then, agreeable to the Will of God,—remember to keep holy the Sabbath; and when we ask in Prayer such Things as are requisite and necessary as well for the Body as the Soul;—let us do it with such Humility and becoming Sanctity, as will be acceptable to him, who sees and governs all; and when we praise him for his manifold gracious Blessings, that we enjoy from the Goodness of his Providence;—let us remember to do it in such expressive and feeling Strains, as are becoming us

to offer, and reasonable for him to accept.—What is the End and Purpose of our Creation; but to endeavour as much as possible to oblige him, who created us? And what is required of us?—"To do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God."—A very plain and easy Lesson,—I see no Hardships insisted on.—Let a passionate Man, who through the Hastiness of his Temper, will unguardedly break out into indiscreet Sallies and rough Expressions with his Superiors, Equals or Inferiors, let him watch it narrowly, and carefully check it; at the first Impulse of Passion, be silent till you can be soft;—endeavour to command your Heart so well, that those disagreeable Emotions may not be read in the Countenance;—a yielding, gentle Meekness, is often insulted and abused by the unjust and unfeeling;—yet Meekness, supported with Humility, Sincerity, and Affection is always respected, and commonly successful.—and to practise these Duties, where can we have a better

Opportunity, than in the public Assembly of the Church?—Some Reasoners will argue, that as Divine Service is no more than a ceremonial Duty, it is, therefore, unnecessary to be attended to, unless by the very Ignorant.—This I deny,—Is it not acknowledged that we all of us, even the most learned, are frail and imperfect Creatures?—And if so, we certainly stand in Need of Means to bring to our Minds, and impress upon them an habitual Sense of the Principles of Piety and Virtue;—how many have we among us that pretend to know the Rules of Goodness, yet forget to practise them, even many, who have the best of Opportunities,—and since this is the Case, what Havock,—what Dissention,—and Confusion, would fill the World without proper Means to correct such horrid Habits.—Hence, we cannot be too attentive to this great Duty, knowing, that though it is not the very Essence of Religion itself, yet, as it is the first Spring, so it keeps us in Mind of our Duty to God, and thus impresses upon us a due

Regard to Piety, Justice, and Virtue.—True, it is universally acknowledged, that the Law of Moses contains many Rites and Ceremonies no Way essential to Religion, but adapted only to the State of the Jews.—Our Saviour, who was doubtless the best Judge of it, declares Judgment and Mercy to be the weightier Matters of it.—The Prophet Isaiah, after summing up several of the Jewish Ordinances, declares, in the Name of God, that their new Moons, Sabbaths, and calling of Assemblies, he could not away with. When you make many Prayers, I will not hear, for your Hands are full of Blood,—would you then make yourselves acceptable to the God of Wisdom and Holiness,—be humble,—be merciful,—cease to do Evil,—learn to do well,—seek Judgment,—relieve the Oppressed,—judge the Fatherless,—plead for the Widow;—these are Duties of such a Nature, that they want nothing to recommend them, but the Practice of them,—say not to the distressed, the unfortunate “*Woe of Pity,*” “I will not relieve thee, it is another’s Duty.”

This shews a mean narrowness of Heart,—is the copying a bad Example,—and discovers contemptible Avarice, instead of a generous Sympathy of Heart, which dignifies frail human Nature.—Strange it is, that rational Creatures could ever snerve so far from that Line, which leads to the very Mark of the high calling of God.—Horrid must be Reflection to that Man, who can do Injustice to his fellow Creatures, or use him cruelly,—merciless Wretch! know that the Hour of Death draws on, and the Day of Judgment will come.—How wilt thou then approach the grand Tribunal, in the Face of that eternal and impartial Judge, who has carefully noted all thy past Offences, and which will rise up in Judgment against thee,—O impious Man! tremble at the Thought! —Consider better the End of the Christian Dispensation, which is to inspire Men with kind and benevolent Affections one for another;—our Saviour tells us, if we love one another, —then shall all Men know, that we are his Disciples

indeed,—and St. Paul informs us, that of Faith, Hope, and Charity, (the chief Parts of the Christian Religion) the greatest of these is Charity,—by which is meant, that kind Concern we owe to our fellow Creatures, which will restrain us from doing any Thing to their Prejudice, and prompt us to procure, as much as possible, their Peace, Comfort, and rational Happiness.—Let us, therefore, as Christians, zealous of good Works, cultivate whatsoever Things are lovely,—whosoever Things are just,—whosoever Things are pure,—and whatsoever Things are of good Report;—these must inculcate in us a Regard to Truth, Probity, Benevolence, Humility, Mercy, and Compassion, or in the Language of the sacred Writer, "Charity towards Men;"—these will subordinate our meaner Passions to the finer Affections of Justice and Humanity, and shew us the true Distinction between Generosity and Selfishness,—which latter is a Character by no Means becoming him, who calls himself a Christian.

—Finally, then, if we wish to do Right, let us love Mercy, learn to be humble and meek:—Let the very Thoughts of Pride, be far from our Minds, and let us spurn Ambition under our Feet.—These destructive Qualities have been the Ruin of many, and sunk even grey Hairs into the Grave of Misery,—dreadful Circumstance!—A Circumstance so well known (would to God it was less) that I humbly hope none here will ever fall into the like Errors.—This, my beloved, is my earnest Prayer, which I again humbly hope, through the Merits and Intercession of our Lord and Saviour, and our own earnest Endeavours, God will grant.—To whom with the Son and the Holy Ghost, &c. Amen.

X

(No. 31.) 8th Chapter Ezekiel, Verse 4th.

"The Soul that sinneth, shall die."

This, at the first View, is a very alarming Sentence! But we are happy under the Assurance, that it is not so severe as alarming;—else, who is he among the Children of Men, that could even hope for Salvation; for we are prone by Nature to sin, and consequently all have sinned;—hence it is evident that the strict Meaning of the Text, is only to condemn those capitally who live in Sin,—increase in it,—rejoice in it,—and die in it without the least Atonement, or the smallest Degree of Repentance; and these only receive what they justly deserve.—True, we have every one of us some prevailing Sin;—some predominant Vice; but then this, even the most prevailing, is easily checked and mortified,—particularly because it is generally well known to us, and therefore if we

are willing,—I think it can be no Difficulty to part with it.
—Only look at the primitive Christians,—what Mortifications were here? what Self-denial?—St. Paul shews us how ready they were to quit all earthly Enjoyments for Christ's Sake,—how they triumphed over their own Weaknesses,—how they laughed at their Imperfections,—and how they crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts.—And since these were Men of similar Passions to ourselves, who were able to do thus,—who were able to overcome the most pressing and powerful Temptations.—Let me ask, is it impossible for us to do likewise?—No,—the Success of their Endeavours take away all those subtle Excuses, which Sloth and Idleness are apt to suggest to us;—and plainly shews us,—if we will,—we may.—If we narrowly scrutinize into our own Hearts, and search out our Spirits, we shall soon Discover our favourite Sin, to which we are most addicted; for there is none of us

brought up with that Care and Circumspection, not to contract some vicious Inclinations,—some ill Habits,—and, as this weak Side is easily discovered, so, if Men will judge impartially of themselves, it may easily be corrected.—Again, many are the Ways that lead to sin,—even the very best of Company are never so pure and refined, but we may receive some bad Impression or Prejudice by it.—The Prophet Jeremiah tells us,—“ Among the People are found wicked Men, who lay in wait, who set a Trap to catch Men.”—And great is the Power of Example and pleasing Conversation,—and hence those Vices are apt strongly to recommend themselves to us, to which we see our dear Companions addicted.—Again,—Are we in Poverty?—In this Situation we are prone to be querulous and impatient, ready to exclaim against God for unjust Dealings.—Are we rich?—then we too often become pompous, arrogant, imperious and domineering,—or,—Do we labour under acute

Pains, heavy Misfortunes and Calamities of Life? Here with Job's Wife, we should be apt "to curse God and die."—Nay our very Business and Employment will lead us unawares into Sin.—As in Trade and Traffic, I doubt not many are the Men, who to vend their Goods to the best Advantage, may be surprized into Breaches of Dishonesty,—which they immediately condemn,—and to do the World justice, many are the alluring Enticements and Temptations Men meet with to lead them to err,—and was every Error we fall into a deadly Sin, alas! who would be saved?—None,—which God forbid,—It is not a single Offence that shall capitally condemn us,—but those frequent and abominable Iniquities, which are odious to God, and shocking to the Ideas of good Men,—and which we will not leave for the Sake of the little,—worthless,—and fleeting Pleasures they afford.—The Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World, and the sin-

feel Lusts of the Flesh,—are such Evils as war against the Soul, and such as are the most dangerous it has to encounter; but even these, when corrected, are not fatal;—and which, if we are sensible of being guilty of them, we must correct, or then,—“the Soul that sinneth, under such Circumstances, shall surely die.”—Did not we promise in our Baptism to forsake these Iniquities? Then in our Confirmation we became bound to perform our Baptismal Vows.—(I hope, therefore, that every Parent and Teacher will remember this,—and not negligently fail to instruct their Children and Pupils in so beneficial a Knowledge and so advantageous a Duty.)—A Duty, which, if neglected, offends and dishonours God,—pollutes and defiles our Nature, and torments and wounds our Consciences, if (much worse than this) it does not consign us to everlasting Torment.—Some may say, that their Natures are so weak and naturally Impotent, that they

cannot always resist the Torrent of Sin, much less instruct others.—I grant indeed, by the Fall of Man, our Nature is much weakened; but still through the powerful Assistance of the Grace of God, we may become more than Conquerors over our Lusts;—and if we ask of God, we shall doubtless receive.—What though we lost some Strength in Adam; yet it is with infinite Advantage supplied by Christ.—God was and is ever ready to assist our Weaknesses; to cleanse our Corruptions,—and teach us to subdue our brutish and ungoverned Passions:—To this End has he not laid us down excellent Rules? Has he not given us a free Will of Acting? And has he not implanted in our Breasts a lively Perception of moral Good and Evil.—Certainly this is evident to the most stupid Mind, and dull Understanding.—Why will we, therefore, trifle with God and our own Souls?—Though he is slow to anger, of much Patience, and long-suffering; yet we

ought not to forget that he reigns absolute, is a severe Judge, and that it is a fearful Thing to fall into his Hands.—Since then this is the Case, since we have a Will to do, or not to do, let us not so blindly Err, as to imagine, we cannot help sinning, and thus foolishly reconcile ourselves to our Transgressions, by imputing the Cause to the unhappy Fall of Adam.—No, this can never plead sufficiently for our Iniquities;—would it not be wicked and impious in me to the very last Degree, to lay in wait for a Man, to kill him, and afterwards to say, that God directed the Blow? O glaring Villainy! In such a Case, will my Conscience clear me? I think not; and I think, nay am well assured, a Soul so offending, unless by a hearty and sincere Repentance, it becomes regenerate, shall surely die.—these are such Souls, as, according to the Text, shall die.—Let us not then plead the Infirmity of the Flesh, as an Excuse to our Transgressions;—This would be a feeble Apology;

for, though we may fall unawares and undesignedly into some Errors,—yet it is too evident, that many are the Sins we wilfully commit,—we grasp at Folly as anxiously as if we were aiming at some desirable Virtue, and exult in the Commission of a favourite Vice,—but this is very blameable and wicked,—we generally are acquainted with our favourite Foibles,—and therefore, may easily resist them;—he must be stupid indeed, who cannot avoid the Pit he sees open before him, or tumbles into a Gulph, he had no Occasion to approach;—a Man that thus falls, must certainly have his own Approbation.—Hence, let no Man say, who Sins, he Sins unwillingly.—I grant you, Sin may solicit and importune, but it cannot compel,—it cannot (without our own Consent) lead us Captive at its Will.—Holy David was a remarkable Sinner, and was beset with many favourite Foibles, yet, when he chose, he subdued them all,—says he, "I have refrained

my Feet from every evil Way."—It follows, then, that the most favourite Sin may be overcome with a willing Mind;—and why are we not only willing, but rather anxious to part with even the most favourite Sin?—If we consider it in its Effects, we find it the Parent of every Misery we feel or fear.—It was this that degraded our Nature from its primitive Perfection; that debased us from a Glory little inferior to the Angels; that reduced us to that frail, passionate, and ignorant Creature we now are; and that brought Death into the World and opened all the Paths of Sorrow that lead to it;—true, a darling Sin possesses so many subtle and captivating Snares, that it is no Wonder Men sometimes err;—but then, by the Assistance of Divine Grace, they may, if they will, escape a second Fall.—Let a Man, therefore, consider how many Dangers and Temptations he is daily exposed to, and then, I trust, he will not fail to fortify himself against them, unless

he is stupidly blind to his greatest Interest,—his eternal Happiness;—Divine Protection is always at Hand,—always ready to supply us with spiritual Strength against Sin, and will not leave us, so long as we desire Assistance;—What Lust then is so impetuous, which we may not subdue? What Temptation so alluring which we may not repulse? St Paul tells us, " If we go boldly and importunately to the Throne of Grace, we shall obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help us in the Time of Need."—It is a comfortable Assurance of our Saviour, where he says, " Ask and you shall receive,—seek and you shall find,—knock and it shall be opened unto you."—Comfortable to the last Degree, to be convinced, that though we have egregiously sinned,—yet we have a merciful Master to repair to, who will hear our sincere Prayers,—accept our hearty Repentance,—and bind up the most grievous Wounds we may have contracted, either by our

Fall or Negligence.—Let us then, who have sinned, begin seriously to think of our Transgressions,—and if we would wish to live eternally, let us heartily repent us of our past Crimes, and seriously resolve to lead new and godly Lives.—Heaven knows the Heart, therefore, let us not rest Content with the bare Appearance only of Virtue, but really be what we would seem to be,—though we may for sometime deceive the World, yet God will not be mocked.—Consider, when we make ourselves Happy, in the Idea of pleasing the World, under the Veil of Deceit—we ought then to be the most miserable and distressed; for, in Fact, we are not deceiving the World, but working an Imposition that is odious to God, and will one Day fall with double Force upon ourselves, to the utter Destruction of our precious and immortal Souls,—from which sad and dismal Situation, God of his infinite Mercy vouchsafe to keep us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

(No. 32.) 7th Chapter Jeremiah, Verses 5th and 7th.

" If ye thoroughly amend your Ways, and your Doings; if ye thoroughly execute Judgment between a Man and his Neighbour; then will I cause you to dwell in this Place, in the Land which I gave to your Fathers, for ever and ever."

This is a kind and an affectionate Caution; and a Promise without an Equal; if we only amend our Ways and our Doings, we are here assured of eternal Happiness in return,—and can we wish for this on easier Terms?—Are we so unreasonable? Certainly it is an easy Matter, by a close Investigation to find out our Faults and Deficiencies, and when these are discovered, it is certainly as easy to amend them.—When the Physician finds out the Disease, the Cure is half effected; and as to the Soul no one was ever

so grievously wounded as to become totally incurable, or Proof against a sincere Repentance.—Would Men but diligently adhere to the Gospel,—would they but attentively listen to the Preachers of it, and weigh well their Reasonings and Exhortations;—the World would move in a different Line.—All Dishonesty would then cease, and Discord and offensive Malice would have an End.—The Lamb might then, without the least Apprehension, play with the Wolf, and the young Child lay its Hand upon the Cockatrice Den.—True, in Religion, as well as in all Arts and Sciences, there are certain Degrees and Steps to be pursued before we can become proficient in our several Professions.—The most eloquent Men are first taught the Rudiments of Education, and the most eminent Mathematician must first begin with the first Elements of Magnitude, if he wishes to become sound in the Science: so the Christian Professor, before he can hope to appear

in perfect Beauty, must proceed onwards gradually; and first amend his Ways and his Doings, before he can expect admittance into that Land; whither our Fathers are gone before us; or before he can be renewed in the Spirit of his Mind:

—And to do this,—to qualify us for such an Admittance, the Author of the Text has laid us down excellent Rules to follow and copy, and what is it the Psalmist tells us? Even "to depart from Evil, to do Good and dwell for evermore."

—That is, if we wish to be happy, we must abhor Evil, and do as much Good as possible:—Further, when we find ourselves surrounded or embarrassed with any imminent Danger, —what dreadful Alarms? What affecting Images of Dread and Horror present themselves? And with what Rapidity do we hurry away from it? Surely then we are never so beset with Peril, as when in the Midst of Sin,—for there is no Situation so terrible,—no Evil so pernicious;—How dare

we then admit it ever to the Breast, or cherish it as if innocent and harmless? Ought not we rather to flee it as the most destructive of Destructives, and avoid it more than a stinging Serpent?—The one can but hurt the Body, which is but a temporary Feeling, while the other wounds the Soul, which without carefully binding up, will never heal.—I doubt not, when Men are often committing Sin, they well know it; and at the same Time as well know its bad Consequences. Why then do they not check the growing Evil,—nip the Weed in its Infancy,—before it has rooted itself too secure for Eradication,—without such Pains, as Mortals are seldom willing to be at:—Great Changes and Revolutions are not suddenly brought about,—we must, therefore, in due Time learn to do Good, and amend our Ways, and thus by exhibiting good Examples, we shall become proper Objects to compromise Disputes, and doubtless will execute just Judgment between a Man and his Neighbour;

—and can we be better employed than in an Office so very commendable to ourselves, and so remarkably beneficial to Mankind in general,—we shall then seem not only to respect our Neighbour; but have a due Regard to that Rule, which directs us in that important Business,—our eternal Welfare;—for our Saviour says, “Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the Children of God.”—An Affair of such Consequence as we ought not to be ignorant of, and especially, if we are Candidates for that Place, promised to all true Believers, and which was given to our Fathers for ever and ever,—There we shall find the true Canaan, where Want never enters, nor Poverty bears sway;—there Affliction shall subside, and all our Grief shall be hushed into Peace and mild Content,—and to the Attainment of a Place,—so desirable,—so devoutly to be wished for,—the Text lays down a Short, but an excellent and an infallible Rule,—“Amend your Ways and your



Doings."—A very plain and easy Lesson this,—and here are no Hardships insisted on:—Let us then like the skilful Gardener and the attentive Husbandman, who first dig and dress well,—turning up the Soil and destroying the Weeds,—before they presume to sow,—least after they had sown, the Weeds should spring up and destroy the Crop;—let us like them cleanse ourselves,—purge the Heart of its diabolical Drops, and then we cannot fail to do that which is good.—Let us root out of our Natures the Weeds of Vice and Folly, and implant the Seeds of Virtue and Religion.—This was the Method St Paul prescribed to his Disciples;—"cast off," says he, "the Works of Darkness, and then put^d on the Armour of Light:—"—The great Reason assigned why Christ gave himself for us, was, first to redeem us from Iniquity, and afterwards to make us zealous of good Works:—Hence then we must put off the Sinner, before we can possibly com-

mence the Saint; for we must not,—nay we cannot expect from the same Spring both sweet Waters and bitter"—Let us not then, under the Cloak of Religion, conceal the Sinner, and hide the Viper of Wickedness,—but alas! the seeming Profits and Pleasures of Sin, are generally so alluring, that they often betray us into egregious Mistakes, and sometimes into irretrievable Errors,—yet would Men but consider the Conclusion of Folly, I am persuaded the fatal and unhappy Effects of it, would deter them from it.—Give me leave then, in order to persuade you more effectually to amend your Ways,—to point out to you the real Profits and Pleasures arising from Evil.—I doubt, upon Examination, that there is nothing in Sin worth caring for,—look at the vicious Man, and behold him full of Trouble and Distraction.—Isaiah tells us, "the wicked is like the troubled Sea, restless and ever working, ruffled and discomposed with every Thing; nay, there

is no Peace, saith my God, to the wicked."—And how should it be otherwise?—For we have a Genius within us, that upbraids our Vices, and torments our Consciences, and hence the greatest Punishment of Sin, is to have sinned,—Then turn your Eyes upon the ambitious Man, fired with Emulation, and who thirsts after Glory and Dominion, and see what Satisfaction is here? Here is a Mind continually agitated with Inquietude;—A Person whose Breast is swelled with Ambition, and the dazzling Appendages of Magnificence, is always wishing to ascend the delusive Height of Power, and climb the Pinnacle of Promotion; and what is the general Product of all this Anxiety and Care? He rises, but to tumble down with Disgrace;—filled with the flattering Ideas of the Happiness annexed to Power, he attempts even Impossibilities, till by his over-reaching Desires he tumbles from the Rocks of Disappointment into the foaming Gulf of Destruction;—nay, when his most sanguine Expectations are

crowned with Success, he finds himself entangled in a Labyrinth of Cares, Apprehensions, and Disappointments; and not only this, but his Inferiors envy him, his Competitors hate him, he is subject to the Resentment of all above him, and his Friends despise him,—When his Affairs are successful, the envious undermine him,—and when his Projects miscarry, he is derided by all, but pitied by none;—he is now in a fine Dilemma truly;—and this, says he, is the Reward of all my Pains! And this is the End of that Ambition, which promised me so fairly.—Oh, Ambition! thou Pest of Nature!—thou Gratifier for a Moment!—thou Tormentor for ever!—Having thus taken a View of the proud and ambitious Man, let us cast our Eyes upon that Person, who is violent, hot, and impetuous upon the least Provocation;—This Man is often the greatest Enemy to himself;—How often does the Fury of such Mortals, terminate in the worst of Consequences?—We often

see them driven by the Tempest of Passion, upon the Rocks of irretrievable Ruin,—While they are rushing forward, intent upon the Destruction of others,—alas! they find the Object escapes the intended Stroke, which inevitably falls with double Force upon themselves,—then their Breasts must bid adieu to Tranquillity, and all Peace of Mind must cease,—fatal Catastrophe!—but what must necessarily befall that Being, whose Anger, or rather Choler, heats to such Fury, that it breaks through every Restraint, and destroys all before it, this much for Anger.—Finally, therefore, let us survey the envious Man, behold! what do we see here! Even the most wretched Creature existing! This Man is never happy,—and what is shocking to observe, he is most miserable when his Neighbour flourishes and tastes the Sweets of Fortune,—his Envy stirs within him, and, like a Viper, gnaws the very Vitals of his Heart asunder.—Says Solomon, "Anger is cruel, and Wrath is raging; but who

can stand before Envy?" Who indeed, for it carries such a Degree of Slander, Malice, and habitual Malevolence, all combined, as renders it odious beyond Conception.—If then any of these Evils, or any other Man is guilty of, are productive of real Pleasure or Advantage, I would wish to be informed; True, many Sins carry the Appearance of Pleasure,—but what is it? The bare Appearance only. For upon a careful Research, we find them full of Deceit and Bitterness,—Only look back upon a Fault after the Commission of it, and I doubt not you will see it in such horrid Colours, that you will not longer delay, but immediately amend your Ways and your Doings.—Let us not then forget to be good, if we would wish for that happy Kingdom, which is subject to no Change, or liable to any Revolution;—it is here where the Righteous shall experience Joys, as far exceeding the present, as they are more Spiritual and Divine, and Pleasures so much the more grateful, as they are more

Innocent and Spotless.—I beseech you, therefore, my beloved, not to neglect becoming worthy of such exquisite Happiness; the Labour is easy, and the Cost but trifling; only learn to break off the Cords of Sin, to amend your Ways and your Doings,—this is all that is required of you, for a Reward that is inestimable;—a Reward that is carefully laid up in Heaven, for the Righteous,—for those who have thoroughly cleansed themselves of their Iniquities, and have executed just Judgment between a Man and his Neighbour,—so easy is the Task, so great, and so desirable is the Reward, that I rest happy under the Assurance, that none here will fail to deserve,—merit,—and receive it.—Which that you may all do, God grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

(No. 33.)

5th Chapter, 2d Epistle Corinthians, Verse 10th.

" For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

The Certainty of a future State is so evident, that I judge it rather unnecessary to endeavour to prove to a rational and a Christian Congregation what has been already made plain in many Parts of Scripture, through the Channel of incontestible Argument,—I shall therefore only shew the Consequences of it, what the Good and Bad are severally to meet with at the last, final, and great Judgment of all.—The Scene that is before us then is certainly an awful one,—and which should be often and seriously reflected upon,—which if we do, we shall doubtless, in Time, make it much more easy and

pleasant to us than it generally is.—Scripture tells us the
Laws our great Sovereign has enacted, by which he means
to judge us,—and to comply with these, his Goodness has made
it in every one's Power;—to do then, what we are able, if
willing, cannot be hard.—Would we then wish so to die as to
appear before the grand Tribunal without Fear and Dread,—
and would we wish so to live as to die with Pleasure?—Then
let us consider the uncertainty of Life,—and that the Body
does not fall into the Ground, there to lie and be forgot,—but
that one Day it shall again rise increased and improved,—
as a Grain of Corn springs up into a plentiful Ear,—and
as every Person is before Death, he shall then appear again in
his own Likeness, and be judged according to his Works,—
and according to his Works receive a final and a just Sentence
of Acquittal or Condemnation,—of everlasting Joy, or eternal
Misery.—And at this Period the Curtain shall drop,—the
Race of Man shall increase no more,—the Earth itself shall

no longer exist;—The Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise,—the Elements shall melt,—and universal Dissolution ensue,—Mankind excepted, who shall alone rise immortal; and behold beneath them the Wreck of Matter, and the Crush of Worlds.—In Scripture we have this Scene represented as a Thief coming in the Night,—and well may it be thus represented,—for we have every Reason to believe that in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye,—this final Catastrophe shall come upon us,—and in an Instant change Millions. —The Dead shall be raised, and the Living transferred to the same Place,—the Throne of Judgment,—left to float in the Heavens without any more Occasion of terrestrial Habitations to rest upon,—And shall all this be performed in a Moment?—Then how ought unthinking Mortals to watch the Time?—Mortals, who still are planning a long and happy Life,—not considering that the next Moment the Trumpet of God may sound an universal Alarm,—at which all from

the King to the Beggar, though never so unwilling, shall arise and speak for himself.—In vain shall the wicked endeavour to hide himself,—in vain shall he intreat the Mountains to fall on him, and veil him from the Presence of the Lord;—and what is still worse, in vain shall he call for that Mercy he refused to give.—Those who attended at Calvary shall then see him they crucified more glorious than the Sun, sitting on the Throne of Justice to condemn those who cruelly,—unworthily,—and unmercifully condemned him;—but what shall we say?—This is Nothing but a mere Shadow of what shall be:—Words,—nay Idea itself is very insufficient to do it justice, and draw a true Picture of it; and this Day of Judgment will as surely rise, as this Morning arose,—and in Obedience to Laws, which can no more fail to bring it forth,—than the Sun could this Day refuse to rise at the Command of its Creator.—The Christian Revelation most seasonably informs us of this.

and particularly in the Resurrection and Ascension of the crucified Jesus.—It assures us too that Happiness is connected only with Virtue,—that Punishment is the sure Reward of Vice,—and that Repentance alone is available to our complete Salvation, through the candid and generous Interposition of our Blessed Lord and Saviour.—But tho' he may intercede for us, and tho' he is a most merciful Being, yet know his Intercession will not exceed Justice;—What we merit, we shall and must receive.—Conceive then the Great Judge of Men,—conceive him darting his Eye through Myriads of his Prisoners, as it were, and instantaneously distinguishing, and severing the Good from the Bad,—and so accurately nice that not one Sheep shall be left in Company with the Wolves;—and at this sad and awful Period naked Truth will discover itself, and appear in genuine Colours,—even the very Shadow of Things shall be seen, and for ever rewarded accordingly;—and what will render this Day still most terrible is, that the Wicked

shall have Justice,—no Retribution in the Grave,—no Invention,—no Form of Excuses,—but alas! the Debt will be then called in, they are not able to pay!—dreadful Thought!—Yet as true, as dreadful,—It will then be verified, that “what we sow, the same shall we reap,—and that out of the Produce of the Heart shall every Man be judged;—while we have Time then let us do good to all Men;”—This indeed is absolutely necessary,—for depend upon it, different Degrees of Practice will have a proportionable Consideration, since where few Seeds are sown, there never can be expected a plentiful Harvest:—If then one, two, or ten Talents are given to our Care, it will doubtless be expected we must improve them, and not lay them up to no Purpose in a Naphin.—This would be saying little for our Industry in the Day of the Lord’s coming,—and we could not be surprised to meet with that mortifying Sentence;—“Thou unprofitable

Servant, get thee into outer Darkneſs where there is Nothing, nor ſhall be any Thing, but weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth.”—But what Comfort ſhall he meet with that hath improved his Truſt;—“ Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of thy Lord, come forward, and enjoy a Kingdom prepared for thee, from the Foundation of the World;—delightful beyond Deſcription, and durable as the Heavens.”—Here we ſee how oppoſite Parties will be treated;—how then will the Reviler give Place to the reviled,—and how will the Cruelty of Power, give Way to the Patience of the injured?—And this muſt be,—the Servant and the Maſter,—the meanest Peaſant and the highest Monarch, ſhall all, without Diſtinction, be laid in the ſame equal Balance of Juſtice.—Lo! the mighty Extortioner ſhall be pulled down, whiſt thoſe he delighted in oppreſſing ſhall be lifted up;—if indeed it was not for this Assurance, this Hope, —how could the oppreſſed many Times bear the Oppreſſion of

merciless Tyrants,—it would be impossible,—Distress would sink them into Despondency,—and Despondency into Death. Thanks be to God, therefore, that Justice will one Day be impartially administered;—Respect of Men and Nations will be totally out of the Question;—perhaps Nineveh, that repented at Jonah's preaching, may put to shame a People that boasted of their Father Abraham;—Sodom may condemn Capernaum;—and I doubt not, in many Instances dark India may put enlightened Britain to the Blush.—Though the one sees Gods only in the Clouds, yet the other—in what? In Idols, in Riches,—in Pomp,—in glingling Titles,—in worthless Honor.—But what will these avail in the last Day,—to talk of having swayed Sceptres, and obtained Triumphs will not so much as gain a Hearing,—the holiest Profession shall not avail,—the Christian Savage shall in vain look for his Name in the Book of Life, but instead of it shall behold that of some gentler Barbarian;—I say Christian Savage, for

what can that Man be stiled better, who has much more than enough,—and yet to gratify a covetous Disposition, will tear the very Garment from his Neighbour, and because he owes him a few Pounds, which, though he has no Need of, yet he will imprison him for Life, or till he pays him the utmost Farthing.

—And again what better is he, who cannot see the Prosperity of a Neighbour without such Envy, as to make him lay out all his Endeavours to deprive him of further Preferment, or rob him of what he has already got by fair and honest Industry;

—Can then such a Being be better than a Savage?—For if he thus delights in robbing his Brother, he cannot be much grieved to see him die a Beggar and forlorn.—Does such a Being, think you, ever think of a Day of Judgment? It is impossible, or Conscience, that makes Cowards of us all, would doubtless change his over-bearing, mercilefs, and cruel Disposition.—

But let us turn our Eye upon him, who is truly worth our Pattern;—him whose Hand was true to his Heart,—alman

open, always free, and his substance increased, because it was liberally and judiciously scattered;—behold Widows,—Orphans,—Prisoners,—and Sorrowers of all Kinds surround him, and call him Father.—What then, what a glorious Reward shall he, at the Bar of eternal Justice, receive.—“Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, thou hast been faithful over a few Things, I will, therefore, make thee Ruler over many Things, enter into the Joy of thy Lord.”—Certainly this is the Man we should wish to be, for he was generous in the highest Sense.—It is proved, he might oft-times have wronged his Neighbour, without a Discovery, and yet he would not, because he loved Mankind, venerated his Conscience, and feared his God,—though he was frequently oppressed by those of greater Power, yet he oppressed no Man, but wisely committed his Cause to the great Judge of all, and patiently waited the Decision of his grand Tribunal; and where then are his Oppressors? Where he never wished them,—fallen a Sacrifice

to their unchristian Cruelty, and for ever shut out from the Intercession of redeeming Mercy, and their Sentence,—
“Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.”—Serious, dreadful Thought!—May we then, my beloved, may we lay it seriously to Heart,—may we endeavour so to live, as the World may say,—Behold Israelites indeed,—rejoicing Sufferers,—benevolent Precedents,—Conquerors of Temptations,—and lovers of Enemies.—These are those, who relieved the Fatherless and the Widow, and kindly wiped away the Tear from the Orphans Eye.—When we deserve these Encomiums, we shall not dread the Day of the Lord's coming, but rather wish for its approach, that we may the sooner enter into his Glory,—bury Hope in Enjoyment, and possess what we have long expected,—Some indeed believe, or at least they profess a Judgment Day, nothing, but a mere Fiction.—and why, because it does not exactly correspond with their Pleasure and Inclination.—But is Death sure? Th

these Scenes we have just been contemplating are equally as certain.—Let every stubborn Unbeliever know, and tremble at the Thought, that the whole human Race shall rise to the Tribunal of a Judge impartial, and though merciful, yet not beyond the Bounds of Rectitude.—My beloved, believe then, that this small Assembly will as surely be there, as it is here,—and let our Belief not end in a bare Contemplation, but in Life and Conduct, for nothing else will answer the main Purpose in that great and awful Day, when we shall behold the wicked justly shudder at their Sentence, whilst the righteous Triumph and Sing for Joy.—May we all of us then be, “ what Manner of Persons we ought to be,” so that finally our Souls may be duly qualified and prepared to bear ~~our~~ Part in that last, serious, and dreadful Interview.—This is my greatest Wish and humble Prayer, through the kind Intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—to whom with the ~~the~~ and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. &c. Amen.

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(No. 34.)

Whitsunday.

10th Chapter Acts, Verses 44th and 45th.

" While Peter yet spake these Words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word; and they of the Circumcision which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because, that on the Gentiles also was poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghost."

The Words which Peter was here delivering, were to prove, that Jesus was the true Christ,—and the promised Messiah that was to come into the World to save Sinners.—He also was industrious to vindicate that the Apostles were chosen his Assistants, and were endowed with a secret inward Knowledge of his really being, what he declared:—This, he tells us, they were commissioned,—particularly commissioned by Heaven to assert, and certify; and above all, to convince the World, that Christ was risen from

the Dead,—become the first Fruits of them that slept,—and was invested with full Power to administer Judgment at the last great and terrible Day of Accounts:—That Day when all Hearts should be laid open, and all Secrets made known. —And lo! while he was thus preaching to his Followers, to Cornelius, a devout Centurion, and his Company, the Holy Ghost,—the third Person in the glorious, though mysterious Trinity, fell upon them equally alike.—Which Circumstance amazingly astonished those of the Circumcision, being Jews converted to the Faith, and had followed Peter from Joppa.—They were amazed to find that the Gift of the Holy Ghost was poured on the Gentiles, as well as on them.—Indeed it is not hard to conceive how such an Astonishment could arise, when we consider, that till this Time it was actuated on those alone, who were Jews by Religion and Birth, and had only a short Time believed in Christ.—Those whose wonted Custom was it to hold any Intercourse or Commerce with any other

Nation; and, if they were now of a different Opinion, yet they were but just reaped, as it were, from their former uncharitable Conceit:—But the Holy Ghost, it is clear, at this Period, fell upon all true Believers without Distinction,—without Respect of Persons;—for not long after its Descent upon the Apostles;—At Peter's preaching, we find, both Jews and Gentiles,—circumcised and uncircumcised,—Believers and Unbelievers, all spake with Tongues and glorified God.—What the Scripture means by the Gift of Tongues, is the Power of speaking any Language in a Moment, without using any Means to acquire it.—And that such a Gift should be, our Saviour, when he left this World, well knew;—and from the Depravity of Man, he saw it would be absolutely necessary;—and, having an Eye upon this, and a Foreknowledge of the Difficulties his Apostles would have to encounter, in the Propagation of his Doctrine, he kindly promises to send them another Comforter,—one, who would well supply the Want of

his Presence, and enable them, not only to encounter, but overcome every Difficulty thrown in the Way to prevent the Progress of the Christian Religion:—And he soon made good his Promise; for not many Days after his Ascension, they were waiting the Completion of it, the Holy Ghost descended visibly upon them, and they immediately and sensibly felt its gracious and miraculous Effects;—At this Time, it seems, none others had been assisted with this surprising Gift, save the Apostles;—for when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, we are told, “that they were all with one accord in one Place; and suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they sat; and there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them; (viz. the Apostles) and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”—Now when this happened, there were

dwelling at Jerusalem devout Jews, from almost every Quarter under Heaven:—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and many others.—And, on this News, all these were assembled together and stood amazed and confounded, (as well they might) to hear the Apostles speaking to them in their own Language, the wonderful Works of God.—What an amazing Instance of divine Power, Love and Wisdom is here at once displayed?—God's Power is in this already manifest, and his Love and Wisdom will appear equally evident, when we consider on what Account this Miracle was wrought.—Our Saviour, out of his extensive Wisdom, knew well what Difficulties the Apostles would meet with, in attempting the Propagation of a new Doctrine;—and therefore, through his boundless Goodness, he made use of this incomparable Method, as best calculated to reconcile the prejudiced,—to convince the obstinate,—and hence, quicken the Progress of so extensive a Work;—a Work committed to only twelve Men, of obscure Birth, and little Influence.—M

of no Art,—unpolished by Breeding,—and unimproved by Education and Eloquence;—and hence, for a more speedy Conviction, such a Work was absolutely necessary.—Had they been obliged, in the usual Way, to have made themselves Masters of the different Languages, how slow would have been their Progress?—Nay, it is to be feared, not any Advances would ever have been made;—or at best, none like a Recompence to the Pains and Trouble they must unavoidably have experienced, in preparing for so extensive a Commission, as they had got;—for they were to “go and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, of the Holy Ghost;”—Consequently they must have had several different Dialects and Languages to have learned,—and hence much Time must have been inevitably lost.—while on the contrary, this Miracle at once gave a Sanction to their Authority, and immediately rooted the Doctrine they were to preach, so firmly, that no Time will ever eradicate it;—

for this conferred such credit on their Proceedings, that Proselytes were presently made, wherever they preached the Faith of Christ;—but still, though many were the Converts that daily flocked in to the Standard they erected; yet, many were the Oppositions they met with,—many the Attempts to baffle and confound them,—and if, with this great Advantage, they met with so many Difficulties, how would their Progress have been retarded, without some probable Means to convince the Multitude, that their Commission was from Heaven, and their Words uttered by a divine Impulse?—Indeed, it would be contrary to natural Reason to suppose, that they would ever be able, merely upon the Dint of their own Industry, Wisdom, or Power, to make any tolerable Impression upon the People;—and particularly at a Season when the World was over-run with Superstition,—pregnant with Vice,—and prejudiced in their received Opinions, in the highest Degree,—and, therefore, to run no Risque in failing in their Attempt, they were immediately

inspired, and, to the Wonder of the World, expounded the Works of God in all Languages, as they met with different People of different Nations;—a Circumstance of this Kind, so suddenly happening, without the Labor of Study, could not fail of effectually convincing their Hearers, that they really were,—what they were,—the Apostles of Christ, and Founders of the best Religion that ever existed.—Being well convinced of this,—the Apostles set out with double Spirit and Confidence, assuring themselves of Success, however opposed;—for they rested their Hope entirely upon this,—seconded by the Strength of modest Simplicity, and honest, undesigning Truth;—~~supports~~ that in the End, will still prevail against all the opposing Powers of Earth and Hell united.—this was clearly proved by the speedy Propagation of the Gospel, which they, with the Assistance of a few Disciples, firmly established, almost every where, in a few Years;—And to have accomplished this, how astonishingly must the same divine Spirit, with which the

Apostles, and their Disciples were actuated and filled;—how astonishingly must it have wrought secretly upon the Minds of Men,—for they heard the Word, and by this gracious Influence, graciously received and embraced it,—embraced that Doctrine, which, happy for us, effectually cleared up that Mist of Error, which darkened the heathen World, and brought Life and Immortality to Light.—Since then, these Benefits, my beloved, were thus liberally bestowed upon Man, let us wisely consider, that this Action of Goodness was permitted, not out of our Merit, but a pure Love, and condescending Compassion to our sinful, and lost State;—let this mighty Consideration sink deep into our Hearts;—and know, that without the co-operating Aid of this divine Spirit, we, of ourselves, have no Power to help ourselves;—it is by this that we are prompted to be virtuous, laudable, good, and honest;—by the Impulse of this benign Power and Grace, we ~~may~~ to see completed all our good Purposes and Resolutions;—It is owing

to the Influence of this, that we are religious and pious, and consequently it becomes the Basis of our future, eternal Happiness,—Without this, we had still been left to roam at large, after the wild Fancies, and irregular Imaginations of our own depraved Minds;—nay, the whole Business of becoming a new Man, of Regeneration, Sanctification, and Salvation, is solely attributed to the Power of the Holy Ghost,—that Power, which is the first and only moving Principle, that produces these happy Changes, to the final, and effectual saving of our immortal Souls.—Can we then think of this? Can we contemplate on this incomparable Goodness of God, in sending so great a Comforter to sinful, unworthy Man, and not be lost in Admiration; and while we admire, not to adore the inimitable Love of injured Greatness? It is impossible, for though we had abused Almighty God, with the basest Ingratitude to his Son,—yet, he would not suffer us to be undone, or leave us comfortless.—What an Instance of

Love is here displayed;—would Men love one another, even Half so much as God loved them, it would be something.— Since then, the Fruit of the Holy Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, and everlasting Happiness,—let us always be ready to comply with the Motions and Suggestions of it.—Let this blessed Spirit have such an Effect upon our Lives and Manners, as to make us sincerely use its Assistances;—Aids, which are always at Hand, and ready to help us.—Let us take careful Heed to be duly obedient to its holy Dictates;—never let any wilful presumptuous Sin, divert us from our Duty, or prompt us to resist the Overtures, or thwart the Projects of the Holy Ghost;—and finally, that we may be able to do all this, let us often, and with sincere Hearts, petition the Assistance of Almighty God,—that eternal Being, to whom all Hearts are laid open,—all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid;—let us heartily pray, that he will so clean

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*Thoughts of our Hearts, by the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love him, and ever worthily magnify
his most holy Name, through Christ our Lord, to whom with
the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.*

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(No. 35.) 2d Epistle Peter, 3d Chapter, Verse 18th.

"Grow in Grace."

An excellent Exhortation this!—It is expressive of such natural Affection for the Benefit of Man, and Zeal for the Service of God,—that we may justly observe, that it does Honour to its distinguished Author,—him, who has laid down many worthy Rules for the Use of Mankind.—How surprising is it then to find a World neglecting those very Precepts they well know are essentially necessary to their eternal Interests?—We have numberless Motives and Inducements to persuade us to Constancy in the Service of God; but shocking for a good Man to observe, we are still like-warm,—nay cold and languid in our Endeavours;—We are inconstant and variable in our Obedience, and come far short in the Practice of that Religion, which we would seem to profess.—How inconsistent is such a Conduct with sound and impartial

Reason?—It must consequently flow from some false Source, or is raised upon a deceitful Foundation.—Its Principles must doubtless rest upon some baseless Fabric, or are supported by a mistaken Notion of Things,—the unhappy Influence of which tends to overthrow the nourishing,—the instructive Motives of the Gospel:—This is evident, and we well know is dangerous and erroneous.—Why then are we still fond in the Indulgence of careless Indolence? and why do we unwisely cherish that wrong Bias and Corruption of our Nature, which of itself is a mighty Hindrance to our growing in Grace?—What then are those Principles,—those mischievous Impediments which so much obstruct our Progress in Religion?—Thoughtlessness, and an Indifference about Religion are the common Faults of too many;—but let me exhort those who are thus situated in Disposition, to watch carefully lest they are unfortunately led into an irretrievable Error.—The Nature of Things is not to be altered by their Indifference; for God will

not be mocked.—Let us, therefore, take particular *Heed* to our *Ways*, for should we fall,—dangerous would be the Bruises we may sustain by it.—Would we deal sincerely with ourselves, (as it greatly behoves us) our *Thoughts of Religion* must be formed, not from our own corrupt *Inclinations*;—but from the very *Word of Truth*, and the *Language of God himself*:—Happy for us, that to this Purpose we have the *Scriptures*, the *Holy Scriptures* to repair to,—these are to promote the *Glory of God* and the *Good of Mankind*; to raise us above the *World and the Flesh*; and to give us a seasonable *Relish for spiritual and refined Pleasures*.—If we consult the *Word of God*, we shall there find such repeated *Exhortations*,—such mild,—such winning *Entreaties to Diligence in our Duty*,—such constant *Watchfulness to Perseverance and Activity*, as are much preferable to, and tower above that lazy and indolent *Religion*, beyond which too many never aspire.—Let us look to the *Lives of the Disciples and Apostles of*

Christ, whose Examples we are commanded to imitate;—There we shall see what Virtues and Graces,—what Care and Diligence,—what Labours and Strivings are necessary to obtain that Crown, which they now possess.—We alas! have foolishly endeavoured to widen the Way, which leadeth to Life,—We, contrary to the Examples of Christ and his Apostles, please ourselves with more easy Attainments in Religion,—those which are better adapted to our own Dispositions, and accommodated to the Modes and Fashions of a backsliding Age,—But whatever vain Notions we may form; our Religion is still the same, and Christianity, as to its Principles, has suffered no Change, even from its first Foundation, nor is the divine Favour any Way altered,—In this Respect, our Situation is still equal to that of the Apostles,—not more secure, nor yet more liable to Distress; and, therefore, how can we,—how must we expect Acceptance with God on easier Terms:—This would be unreasonable, if not impious, and making God a partial Dealer;

—If this was the Case, we would have poor Encouragement to persist in Goodness; for thus we could not expect to be rewarded according to Merit, but, (according to the Fashion of this World) as our Rank and Birth entitled us;—It would be hard then,—truly hard, (agreeable to such Doctrine) for a poor Man to enter into the Kingdom of God;—But thank Heaven, our Situation is otherwise,—let a Man, poor or rich, high or low, only sow and he shall reap,—merit, and he shall receive;—A comfortable Assurance to the Poor and heavy laden, and cheering Consolation to the oppressed;—And what still gives Pleasure to the Sweet,—It is as true, as comfortable, and as certain, as cheering.—Again,—Want of Confidence in the Declarations and Promises of God, is another great Impediment to our growing in Grace;—The Conduct of too many plainly evidences this,—shows that they are more anxious for their Treasure here,—than for the Blessings of Futurity?—But to think favourably, let us hope that divine

and open Infidelity has not, as yet, spread its Contagion here;
—Yet many Professors of Christianity have such Thoughts
as these, (*viz.*) that the Road to Heaven is broader than
it is represented by the Evangelists;—that God will admit us
to his Graces on easier and milder Terms;—and that though
he is a severe Lawgiver,—yet he will not be a terrible Judge.

—Now where these Thoughts are indulged,—Have not they
frequently an unhappy Influence on the Life and Conduct?

—Granted,—Let us then unfeignedly believe the Revelation
of God;—for were the different Abodes of good and bad Men,
in a future State, present to us by Faith,—or had we the
Prospect, which the blessed Martyr St. Stephen had, when he
saw the Heaven open, and the Son of Man at the right Hand
of God surrounded with Angels and the Spirits of just Men
made perfect;—Could we open our Ears to the never ceasing
Hymns of Praise sung to Him that was, and is, and is to come;

Lamb that was slain, but liveth for ever;—Or to reverse the

Scene, were the Iron Gates of Hell unbarred, that we might at one View see the fallen Angels fast bound in eternal Chains, and the Souls of wicked Men overwhelmed with Torment and Despair; and were our Ears open to hear the dismal Pit groan with perpetual Misery,—Cries which can never reach the Throne of Mercy, but return in sad Echoes to the Place from whence they issue! surely these would move us differently, render us more earnestly watchful to avoid those Paths which lead to Destruction, and kindle in us more vehement Desires for that Holiness, without which no Man shall ever see the Lord.—But, as this cannot be, let us view the World, and see how the Prospect of Gain captivates the Covetous,—how the Expectation of Pleasure enflames the Voluptuous,—how the Sight of Vanity elates the Proud,—and how the Hope of Glory fires the Ambitious;—and should not the Charms of Grace have the same, nay, rather a greater Power over the Christian Will,—Should not the Prospect of the heavenly Crown inspire

his Soul? And should not the precious Hopes of eternal Glory regulate his Life and Conversation.—Sure the Promises of God are great and valuable, and should not be forfeited on easy Terms.—Let us not, therefore, set too great an Estimate on Things of this World, for thus we totally destroy the Love we owe to the great Head of all;—The Love of the World is a Passion, which, though it is very destructive, yet it universally prevails among the Children of Men;—in some it bears such sway,—reigns so uncontrollable, that it renders them totally blind to their most valuable Interests;—In others, how often has it the unhappy Influence to blunt the Edge of Conscience, and to destroy the most promising Beginnings of Grace and Goodness? The young Man in the Gospel, who thus accosted our Saviour, “What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?” had a promising Prospect, but we find that a secret Love to the Things of this World, blasted all those fair Appearances;—Though his Life, according to the great Commandment of the Law was Innocent

and Blameless,—yet he was only—almost a Christian,—and so it is with every indifferent Professor of Religion;—he is under the Dominion of some sensual worldly Lust, which spoils the Relish of the hidden Manna, and obscures the Beauties of the heavenly Canaan.—Whence is it that we find Men so generally Careless about their spiritual Concerns? But from a too great Fondness of the Body and its Pleasures, and their ardent Propensities for the Enjoyments of the World;—they never consider those, who sow to the World and the Flesh, shall of these reap Corruption.—Did we only reflect how soon the Fashion,—the Pomp,—and Grandeur of this World passeth away,—we should not fail to observe the great Difference between the Possessions of Heaven and Earth;—we should then set the true Value upon the Things of the World, and consequently not over-rate the Riches,—the Honours,—the Pleasures of it.—Did we only devoutly think of that Time, when Christ shall appear in his Glory, and receive us into his Favour.—Had

we only a conscious Sense of the divine Favour conducting us through Life to endless Happiness;—this would doubtless render our Situation, here, sufficiently secure,—easy,—and pleasing;—but it may be objected by some, as impossible to attain such Happiness below;—and they argue that Experience tells them so; i. e. because, though most of those, who live in the Neglect of Piety,—yet if they have, as it generally happens, at some Time, warm Resolutions, and vigorous Attempts to “grow in Grace;”—the Task being unusual, is unpleasing,—laborious,—and painful;—and therefore, be their Endeavours never so earnest, they are liable to relapse into their former Transgressions and Omissions.—Unless we proceed properly, even the greatest Diligence may fail; If we resolve against Sin, yet do not guard against it, our Resolutions are vain.—If we wish to “grow in Grace,” and will not use the Means, what wonder is it that we fail? Nay, should we embrace the best Methods imaginable, and, for a while, proceed onwards with the greatest Spirit,—

yet, if we grow faint and weary, our Labour is lost;—True, it is impossible,—nay, unequal to the Nature of mortal Beings to keep always up to the same Pitch,—but then it is not impossible for them after committing a Fault to recover and wind themselves up to the same Pitch again,—and though a fresh Repetition of the same Fault may succeed,—yet, Recollection and a fresh Resolution, may also succeed, and, through the Grace of God, become effectual.—Scarce any one in an Attempt is successful at first:—but by Perseverance, how many of the hardest Difficulties are overcome?—A moderate Share of Time and Pains will soon remove the most obstinate Irregularities, and gain at last an entire Conquest.—and the sooner we engage in such a Conflict the better, before repeated Acts of Wickedness confirm themselves into inveterate Habits.—Hence the Advice of Solomon to his Son on this Head may be very instructive,—says he, " My Son gather Instruction from thy Youth, so shalt thou find Wisdom til

thine old Age? Come unto her as one that ploweth and soweth, and waits for her good Fruits. My Son, if thou wilt, thou shalt be taught, and by applying thy Mind, thou shalt be prudent; let thy Mind be upon the Ordinances of the Lord, and meditate continually on his Commandments; he shall establish thine Heart, and give thee Wisdom at thine own desire."—Whoever, therefore, wishes to be pious and good, let him persevere in his Desires, and thus he cannot fail of securing his End,—let him have a steady Confidence in him who strengthens all our Endeavours;—and let him engrave upon the Table of his Heart, this comfortable, encouraging Inscription,—“Blessed are they, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness,—for, through the Grace of God, they shall be filled.”—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

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(No. 36.) 1st Epistle St. Peter, 2d Chapter, Verse 21st.

“ Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we
should follow his Steps.”

Such are the Words of that very dignified
Apostle St. Peter, and such was the Life of that distinguished
Person Jesus Christ.—He came into the World,—suffered for
the Example,—and died for the Sins of ungrateful Man;
—And as he came to serve, and to be an Example to the
World,—it is to be hoped he did not come in vain;—but
that there are many to be found, who will readily adhere to his
Precepts, and joyfully follow his Steps,—However we have
the most flattering Hopes of finding it so, when we consider, what
influence Example generally has over the Minds of Men.—
Precept indeed has its Votaries;—but it falls far,—very far
short in Power, where Example is in the Question;—When,
therefore, we find them blended together as in the Life of Christ

—what Mind of generous Sentiment and common Reason can withhold itself from Subjection, or refuse to copy their united Dictates?—While the one confirms to the Conscience the Duty of Right,—the other by a lively Pattern, persuades to Action, and thus, in a Measure, commands our Esteem and Practice.—This cannot but be repeated, when we observe how prone we are in general to follow the Customs of Men, and how mighty solicitous to conform to the Ways of Superiors,—'Tis, to this Cause, that we owe many of our Errors and Foibles:—Too easily led,—and too careless about the Event,—we often pay a servile Regard to visible and bright Patterns, though ever so destructive;—and if bad Example so soon gains upon us, may I not, without Presumption, hope, that virtuous Deeds will operate the same Way, when duly considered as to their intrinsic and much superior Value.—Christ then, the Son of the great God in Heaven, was the very "Image of Virtue and native Innocence itself, " he did no Sin,

neither was guile found in his Mouth;" —and very contrary to what we had any Title to expect, he rendered us entirely "dead unto Sin, and alive again unto Righteousness:" — This he did by bearing our Sins in his own Body upon an ignominious Tree; —and thus, by his Stripes, we were healed; —for till this Time, we were as Sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls; —And did Christ do all this, and shall we refuse to be grateful? Shall we refuse to do as he commanded? If we bear this, his condescending Goodness in Mind, 'tis impossible. —Let our future Conduct, therefore, be guided by the Influence of his Example. —The Way he chalked out, as a Directory to our Steps, he first, to shew his Approbation of it, trode it himself; —The Laws he has prescribed for the Government of our Lives and Actions, he obeyed with the utmost exactness; and, by no Means proposed a Burthen heavier to us, than what he was always both ready and willing to bear himself;

—For, says he, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest;—take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in Heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls;—for my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light."—Can any Thing be more persuasive, or more really worthy our Attention?—Or can a greater or more worthy Example claim our Respect or Esteem?—If not,—if our Inclinations are governed by our Minds, thus informed, we must as naturally be led to Virtue and Holiness,—as a vicious Man is swayed and governed by his favourite Passions;—If we allow ourselves to consider, we must conclude, that the Motives to pursue the Paths of Virtue are much more forcible, than those, even the most alluring and prevailing, which lead to Wickedness and Folly.—The former are productive of universal Respect and eternal Happiness,—While the latter, at best, are but transient Pleasures, and end in everlasting Misery and

Death.—He who, therefore, wishes to be enrolled among the Disciples of Christ, must carefully copy that amiable Example he has set before him;—he must endeavour to conform to his Practice,—resemble his Goodness,—and, as much as possible, “be perfect, as he was perfect,—and holy, as he was holy.”—Let the Manner of our Lives,—let an upright and honest Conversation, and let our Zeal for Virtue evidently testify whose followers we are.—Let Sincerity guide the Helm, while we swim down the Tide of Life, and our Haven shall doubtless be a still and undisturbed Place of Rest, though we may encounter in the Voyage many tempestuous Hurricanes and threatening Seas.—Thus the primitive Christians bore up against every Storm, which they were much more liable to be exposed to than we are, and despised the keenest Sufferings, and most excruciating Tortures, for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake.—But they well knew the Truth and Origin of the Gospel, and hence wished for nothing so much as the Blessing

and Promises it proposed; and thus, looking forward to Christ, the Author and Finisher of their Faith, they endured the severest Cruelties with Patience, in order to obtain to themselves a Seat with him at the right Hand of God,—which, I will dare to assert, they obtained, and do, and shall for ever enjoy.—This is the Reward of copying the Example of him, who did not scruple to descend from Heaven with no other View than to save and redeem us, who were miserably gone astray, a Point that could not possibly be gained without Bloodshed; and because this was found necessary, our Saviour, to leave nothing undone, willingly spent his last Drop upon Calvary.—Nay, if we further examine the Life of our Saviour, we will find it upon fair and sound Reason, much above all others, worthy our Regard and Imitation.—In the Societies and Governments he lived under, how peaceable was he,—how submissive in his Department,—and quiet in his Behaviour,—though

he knew he had it in his Power even to overturn Kingdoms, and had many daring Incentives offered to provoke him to it, —yet, he was ever tranquil, and rather than oppose Hardships with Severities, he wished to bend to the Arm that smote him.—Whatever were the governing Powers, he was all Obedience to their Commands,—and exactly conformed his Actions to the Laws they prescribed;—a Lesson, that teaches every one who is a Friend to the Repose of his Country to do likewise.—Our Saviour's Business was not by any Means to stir up Seditions, and raise Contentions in the State, but to preserve Order and Harmony among the People, and teach them, by Example, Obedience necessary both to God and Man.—In the midst of his Office, though he was in Reality the King of Kings, yet he still owned a due Submission and Allegiance to the civil Magistrate.—Says he, “Render to Caesar the Things which are Caesar's, and to God the Things which are God's.”—Nay, when he himself had no Moners

to shew the Propriety of yielding Homage to Superiors, rather than Caesar should lose his Right, he was at the Expence of a Miracle, to provide for, and satisfy the Demands of the Tribute Gatherers;—and as he was thus attentive in civil, so was he equally so in religious Affairs,—he as punctually conformed to the Rites and Ceremonies in Use, of an innocent and indifferent Nature, as he did to those of divine Institution,—shewing, that we should not be scrupulous in attending to the Orders of Men, where they contain nothing Immoral, or contrary to the Rules of Justice, and Dictates of Reason.—A good Institution is not less so, because it is of human Appointment, and, therefore, to condemn it, would only expose our Weakness,—discover a foolish contradictory Spirit,—and exhibit a Heart rather perverse, than, what it would seem to be, pious and good.—Again, in the farther Tracts of our Saviour's Life, we find that he was all Humility, — free from the least Affectation;—he had no Thirst after

Glory, nor did the smallest Spark of Pride appear in any Thing he ever did or said;—for, though he thought it not Robbery to be equal with the great God in Heaven,—yet he made himself of no Reputation,—was formed in the Likeness of Man,—took upon him the Office of a Servant,—and humbled himself to the Pangs of Death, even the Death of the Cross;—What Humility is here displayed?—Thus we see him, who was the very Head of all Majesty and Glory, divest himself voluntarily of all his Honor, and stoop to the meanest Degree of Shame and Misery.—His Meekness too was equally conspicuous;—for to Anger, he was a total Stranger;—whatever Provocations he met with, he bore them with an even Temper, and steady Posture of Mind.—“When he was reviled, he reviled not again,—when he suffered, he threatened not.”—But like a most tender Parent, when he was suffering the most barbarous and unmerited Cruelties, he exclaimed, “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.”—

Surely, this Mark of Kindness, cannot escape our Attention, or fail to engage our Imitation,—nay, let me ask, Can we look at his Virtue, and not be good?—Can we look at his Humility, and not be lowly?—Can we look at his Meekness, and not be mild?—Or, Can we at leisure behold his forgiving Temper, and be full of Resentment and Revenge?—If we set the Life of our blessed Lord always thus before us, I am verily persuaded we shall never violate our Actions, by running Counter to the Dictates of Reason, or the Maxims of Religion;—and when we act within the Limits of these, we shall become tolerable Copies of him, “Who suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we might follow his Steps.”—Let us then, my beloved, let us like him be Patient, and Content in every Exigency of Life.—Consider his Situation was the most abject and deplorable,—for, “he had not where to lay his Head,” neither had he the common Necessaries of Life, save what the Charity of a few bestowed upon him, amidst the most implacable

ble Malice of surrounding Enemies;—and yet, amidst all these discouraging Circumstances, he maintained an Evenness of Temper, and Composure of Mind.—Why then do we, even dare to Murmur at our Condition, seeing it might have been Ten Thousand Times worse.—Let us rather bend to the most awful Stroke of Affliction, and kiss the Arm that smites us. Has Christ then left us an Example, that we should follow his Steps? Then let us live as becomes his Disciples, let us be patient under Sufferings,—duly submissive to Superiors,—humble in Prosperity,—meek under Affronts,—and ready in the Forgiveness of Injuries.—In this godlike Temper and Conduct,—in such a steady Adherence to the Principles of our Duty, though all the World, and the most enticing Persuasions of deceiving Sinners stand in Competition, we shall still remain unhurt.—Which, that we may always do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honor and Glory, &c.—Am

X
(No. 37.) 1st Chapter St. John, Verse 17th.

"The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ."

This evidently sets forth the Preeminence of our Saviour's Doctrine over the Law of Moses, and to illustrate which shall be the Business of the present Discourse.—The Law of Moses, while it did, and was to continue in Force, was certainly the purest and most perfect Religion that then existed; and those that lived under it, undoubtedly enjoyed many considerable Advantages, which those, who were ignorant of its valuable Aids, could never possess; It was a fixed Standard and Rule for Mankind to follow, and in many Respects well worthy their Attention; and consequently those, who were under its Direction and Influence, had many Benefits, which those could never Experience, who were left to the dim Light of Nature only to direct them in their Duty, and lead

them to eternal Happiness;—And this was the Case of all the World, the Jews excepted, who were the particular Favourites of and alone had certain and true Notions of the one all-governing God.—Their Ideas were totally turned that Way, and they were always anxious to preserve these Notions,—to abstain from Idolatry, and the serving of strange Gods;—such as the Heathens worshipped, and all other neighbouring Nations;—and by Virtue of this Conduct, the Jews were often led more and more to discover one all-powerful Deity, through the special Care and Interposition of his divine Providence.—His Government too was a signal Declaration of this;—all was Decorum—The Seasons regular,—and all Creation proclaimed aloud a God,—a universal Protector and Judge,—which naturally induced them to conceive good Hopes of a future State, and the lasting and desirable Rewards of another World:—But above all this, they enjoyed a most peculiar Blessing above the Rest of Mankind at that

Period:—In Addition to their natural Reason, they had the Lines of their Duty pointed out by God himself, and handed down to them by Moses; and if any remarkably fell short in their Obedience, or transgressed against the Commandments of God, they are directed how to amend by the Message and Warning of Prophets;—Prophets sent on purpose to reclaim them from their Errors,—to teach them the Way of Righteousness,—and shew them the Danger of an impenitent Course of Life;—And by Way of encouraging Virtue they had many other Intimations that God would pardon the repenting Sinner, and that he would one Day provide a sufficient Sacrifice to atone for the highest Offences, and most degrading Transgressions:—But further,—they had express Promises and Threatenings of Blessings and Punishments,—which though of a temporal Nature,—yet they were to check the lower Appetites,—bridle the unruly Passions,—and consequently of the highest Moment;—Certainly so when no

consider that no other Nation enjoyed equal Privileges with this the Jewish:—But it is evident they were God's peculiar People, whom he delighted to honor with his Presence, and prescribe them Laws above what any other Nation could boast of or pretend to; and it is upon this Law, the Dictator of moral Duties, on which the main and most substantial Part of Religion is founded;—And therefore to lead good and holy Lives,—to act consistent with the Dictates of Conscience, is all that is, or can be required of Men;—What signify all outward Observances, if the Heart is not pure and cleansed from Iniquity?—What signifies all outward Decorum in Worship, if the Disposition does not correspond?—These are of little Moment, when the weightier Matters of the Law, Righteousness, Justice, and Truth are neglected and despised;—For thus says Isaiah, in his first Chapter, in the Name of God,—“To what purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? Bring no more Oblations;—Your new Moons,

and your appointed Feasts my Soul hateth;"—But further, in the same Chapter, he tells us how to please and render ourselves acceptable with God; —Says he, "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes;—cease to do evil, learn to do well;—Seek Judgment, —relieve the oppressed,—judge the Fatherless,—plead for the Widow;" —But still to urge particularly the Superiority of true Godliness to mere Rites and Ceremonies, I shall beg Leave to lay before you an useful Observation of the Prophet Micah;—Says he, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?—Shall I enter his Presence with burnt Offerings? —Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, and ten thousands of Rivers of Oil?—He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,—to love Mercy,—and to walk humbly with thy God."—And this is a Doctrine our Saviour by no Means intended to alter, but rather to strengthen,—encourage, and

to preserve its Power for ever over the Minds of Men.—He came with a View not to abolish, but confirm the Obligation of the moral Law, and purge it of the Difficulties and Misapprehensions the Jews had conceived about it; for he tells us himself;—"Think not," says he, "I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets;—I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one Jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled;—Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of God; but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven: For I say unto you, except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."—Thus having shewn you the Use and Extent of the Mosaic Law, it remains to consider the Virtue of the Gospel, to shew how

far it exceeds the Jewish Guide, and hence discover how much we are indebted to Heaven for this superior Advantage.—The Text tells us, “ that the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.”—This evidently shews us, that the Gospel finished completely what the Law only aimed at;—though the Law was undoubtedly very good, yet it still left Room for the Introduction of a better, and more spiritual Dispensation, to supply the Defects and Imperfections it contained, entirely accommodated to the Frailty of human Nature, and must necessarily have been wanting in many Points;—Nay, it was particularly deficient in the Advantages of Grace and Truth, which St. John justly observes, were reserved for the Christian Religion to reveal, and were first proclaimed and published in the World by our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;—and because these were neglected and forgot by Moses, our Saviour was particularly attentive to them.—Now Grace, in the new Testament, is used in different Senses:—first

it often signifies the Mercy of God in the free Pardon of our Sins or Justification,—and though this Pardon was often sought for, both by the Heathens and Jews, yet it was carefully reserved till God's own due Time,—For what Power could there be in the Blood of Bulls and Goats to wash away Sins?—Though God himself required Sacrifices and Expiations, yet they were only Types of a better and more perfect Oblation, and never intended to wipe off, or atone for every Sin,—hence the great Blessing of the full Assurance of Pardon and Forgiveness of our Sins was not sufficiently attested, till it was purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and published in his Gospel.—Of this we are well assured by St. Paul,—says he, “Be it known unto you, Men and Brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you Forgiveness of Sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all Things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.”—Again, Grace is used in Scripture for the Gifts and Assistance of the Holy Ghost,

—as it helps to make Men virtuous, and turn them from Iniquity.—True, God's holy Spirit was ever at Hand, and always ready to assist those that craved it,—for as God is essentially Good, he must always have been willing and desirous to grant to Man the necessary Means to encourage and lead them in the Way of Piety and Holiness,—and therefore, no one was ever yet particularly eminent in any Instances of Goodness, but he must have been guided by his holy Spirit, to accomplish and perform it;—but we must remember, that this Assistance was only the Effect of God's great Mercy to Mankind, and not what at that Period, they had, from any particular Promise, any Right to expect.—This Favour was only presented to us in the Gospel, where it is there very wisely represented by the Word Grace.—We have it thus used too in the 1st Epistle of Peter, in a beautiful Simile,—says he, “ No every Man hath received the Gift of the Spirit, so let him Minister, as a good Steward of the manifold Grace &c

God."—And in a general Sense, Grace is certainly of the highest Moment to Mankind;—consider, how it removed the Curse of the Law, and rendered the Privileges of the Gentiles equal with those of the Jews;—nay, it extends itself to all Nations, which have a firm and solid Faith in Jesus Christ, and, consequently shews itself a very essential Improvement upon the Mosaic Institution.—The next Thing that adds greatly to the Perfection of the Christian Religion is, Truth.—Now it is well known, that the Jewish Law consisted much in mere unprofitable Rites and Ceremonies,—in Circumcisions and Purifications, which in themselves had no real Virtue and Efficacy, but were certainly Types of the Truth we now enjoy, which being done away in our Saviour, the Shadow of Things have given Way to Truth and Reality, and the Benefits and Blessings we now inherit, are permanent and lasting, and cannot deceive us,—hence it is evident that Grace and Truth, which came by Jesus Christ, are of inestimable Use to Man.—

It remains, therefore, to urge, that we make a proper Use of these Privileges we enjoy.—Let us then, in every Circumstance of Life, let us exercise the moral Duties;—the Duties of Humility,—Meekness,—Mercy,—Purity,—Love,—and Righteousness;—if we fulfil and submit to these Things, we shall obey the Law in its fullest Extent;—these are the Sum and Substance, the very Center of the Law and the Prophets;—for our Saviour tells us, that the Love of God, and our Neighbour, are the two Commands on which depend all the Law and the Prophets, for to these all other moral Duties are reduced.—But further, if Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ, let those who call themselves Christians, diligently seek them;—can there be a more inestimable Blessing bestowed on wretched Man, than the gracious Tender of free Pardon of his Sins, and the Assistance of God's holy Spirit to help his Repentance?—Let us then endeavour, and we shall not struggle in vain;—if we ask, it shall be given,—if we seek.

we shall find,—if we knock, the Doors of Heaven shall be opened.—May God then grant, that these Assurances may quicken us in our Duty, and help us to kill, and mortify our sinful Affections, and carefully cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of Body and Spirit,—and, in one Word, may he assist us in the right Way to perfect and pure Holiness in the Fear of our ever blessed Lord,—Redeemer,—and Judge.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

x

(No. 38.) 4th Chapter Epistle James, Verse 8th.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: Cleanse your Hands, ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts, ye double-minded."

When we reflect upon the many excellent Admonitions that compose the Scriptures, how amazing is it still to find a rational World shy and reserved with its Maker? — A World that pretends to a Knowledge of him, yet too generally seems rather desirous to shun a Correspondence with God, than, as it ought, anxious to cultivate it; — Nature says, that this is its absolute Duty, and what it ought to rejoice in. — For do not we caress and court, with the utmost Diligence, the Man who has it in his Power to prefer us even for a Time? Then it certainly becomes our bounden and most necessary Duty to oblige and draw near to him, who is able to prefer us to Blessings beyond Conception, and which will last for ever — and what still more amazes us is, that we are so particularly fond in courting it

Favours of Men, which, though promised, we are never certain to enjoy,—and yet seem careless about the Blessings of God, which, if we ask, we are sure to receive,—“If we draw nigh to God, he will draw nigh to us”.—An Assurance too comfortable for a prudent Man to neglect, and if any one is too foolish to despise it, he must rest himself happy under the Consequences; Happy did I say?—No—he must rather rest miserable under the Displeasure and Wrath of God, he has wilfully incurred, and brought upon himself.—Let Man then with holy David—Call up all his Iniquities,—set them before him,—survey them with an impartial and a critical Eye,—and ruminate upon them without Prejudice,—and doubtless with him he will agree, “That it is good for him to draw near unto God.”—Let a Man not say, I look into the World, I behold the Ways and the Doings of Men, and I see the Riches of this World equally given to the Ungodly, as to the
“—they dwell in the Midst of Affluence, and are

liable to no more Misfortunes than other Men.—I say, let not these be the Arguments of Men to reconcile them to sin; —But let them rather repair to the Sanctuary of God and there learn to know, that though the Riches of this World are not always intailed upon God's Children, yet he is truly good and gracious unto his Servants.—Let the impious Wretches abound in Wealth, and wallow, as it were, in Affluence,—yet be assured, that their Situation is very slippery, and they may fall in a Moment,—they are seldom free from troublesome Terrors,—and they are generally despised by the Good:—Let not then the Prosperity of the Bad, tempt us to do as they do; —But rather let us, as our Afflictions encrease, draw more near to God,—and though the Lashes we receive are many and severe,—yet let us, like true Christians, adore the mighty Arm that wounds us;—They are all for our Benefit, and will redound to our Profit at last;—they try our Integrity, and shew us to God and the World what we really are,—

they discover whether our Hands are cleansed, and if our Hearts are pure;—and if, after these Trials, we are found to be, what we ought to be;—Then will our heavenly Father draw near unto us, and acknowledge us his Children, and pronounce us Inheritors of that Kingdom prepared for us from the Beginning of the World.—Our first unhappy Step towards Misery was our Departure from God;—This we all know, and therefore cannot but also know that it greatly behoves us, if we would wish for Happiness, to return to that Place to find Peace, where we first by Disobedience lost it.—If then I have defiled my Hands, why do I refuse to cleanse them, or if my Heart has suffered Corruption, why do not I purify it?—This may be easily done by contracting an Intimacy with him, who is alone able to support our Weaknesses,—supply our Wants,—and purify the Heart from all vicious Habits.—Would Man look at his own Insufficiency,—would he consider his Inability to redress his Infirmities, I am

certain he would soon see the Necessity of a superior Power to assist him in diverting the Evils that so often beset him;—And would he see the Necessity, and yet through a false Pride refuse to ask such Assistance?—'Tis impossible, a Man who could thus see, would blush at the very Thought of risking a dangerous and a dreadful Overthrow,—for the poor Indulgence of an empty, obstinate, and destructive Pride;—He knows he cannot stand by himself, and he is very certain this cannot support him.—This is evident on many Accounts, because he is liable to so many Evils and Calamities he can neither prevent nor remedy, and encircled with Infirmities he cannot redress;—This, then, I take, is sufficient to convince us of the Expediency of a superior Aid to hold up our Infirmities and strengthen our Weaknesses;—and in this we are happily and well supplied, we have a noble Resource to draw to, that is able, —willing, and that never tires in assisting those who repair to it;—Here is infinite Wisdom that alone can shew us

the Good we aspire at,—that alone can contrive and secure our Happiness,—and that best perceives what is most fit and convenient to supply our Necessities and gratify our Wards,—Here the Sinner may be well instructed how to cleanse his Hands, and the double-minded may learn to purify their Hearts.—Can we then by any Means do better for ourselves than by drawing near to that all-sufficient Being, whose Power enables him,—whose Will inclines him,—and whose Goodness presses him to help and succour us;—and who is the Beginning of all Things,—the Idea and Pattern of every Virtue?—Well might that holy Man, Moses, pronounce Israel happy to whom the eternal and Omnipotent God was a Refuge; underneath whom hung the everlasting Arms,—says he, “There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the Heavens in thy Help, and in his Excellency on the Sky;—happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee? O People, saved by the Lord, the Shield of thy Help, and the Sword of

thy Excellency!"—Here the good Man seems in Raptures with the surpassing Happiness of the Israelites; and can any one be otherwise when he reads over the 33d Chapter of Deuteronomy? Let him here see what Blessings brood upon the Righteous,—what Happiness is extended to him, who draws near unto God,—and then let him ask himself, if he can longer abide in Iniquity?—No, the more he ruminates upon a virtuous Conduct, the more he must condemn the Hypocrite, and admire the Israelite,—and it must certainly be a consummate Pleasure to him, who can examine his Breast, and there exclaim in Raptures, "I thank thee, O God!—Through thy Assistance, I am become as an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile." What Peace of Mind, what Ease of Conscience must inhabit a Breast like this?—Can we think of it, and not covet it?—Certainly it is far beyond all these momentary Pleasures this corrupt World affords;—These are at best but for a Time, and even then very superficial;—The other are eternal, solid,

and permanent.—Let the eternal God, therefore, be our everlasting Strength and Shield,—for through him alone true and real Joys are to be found;—the wisest of Men, after he had tasted the very Quintessence of all earthly Enjoyments, pronounced them productive of nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit;—and indeed, I cannot but agree with him, that all earthly Pleasures are very low and mean when compared with the ravishing Delights of a solid Piety,—Alas! what Satisfaction can we Promise ourselves here in a World, that passeth away and all its Glory,—the Rich,—the Poor,—the Base,—the Brave,—all without Distinction die;—the richest Titles then, the highest Honours that ever Monarch wore, must inevitably fall to the Ground;—they live a while, but like a Meteor of the Night are subject to a dying—dying Fall.—But in God there is no Variableness,—he is immutable, firm, and stedfast;—he cannot be false, like Man, nor will he betray his Trust, all with him is Sincerity and Truth, and to have Confidence

placed in him, gives him Pleasure beyond Conception;—and in what else should we Trust, or in whom repose our Confidence?—When we are encircled with Dangers on every Side, shall we trust in our own Wisdom or Understanding? Shall we confide in our own Might and Strength? And shall we despise or neglect to call for his Aid, in whom we live, move, and have our Being? Shall we trust in our Wealth? Alas! the wise Man tells us, “The Man that trusteth in Riches shall fall.”—Shall we trust in Kings, or those in high Life, at the Helm? This is also vain, for a Man being in Honor abideth not,—then shall we depend upon our Friends or Relations?—these may not have Inclination always to help us, or perhaps may not have Ability; but should they, remember they are but mortal, frail Creatures, and cannot abide with us for ever,—for what is Man but a Breath, a Shadow, the Sport of Fortune and Envy, and the very Image of Inconstancy,—his Life is a Vapour, his Strength but a Silken

Thread, in the Hand of the Almighty.—O put not then your Trust in Princes, who are liable daily to be dissolved and mixed with their kindred Clay, and whose Thoughts and Projects will one Day perish, and be lost in Oblivion.—But Isaiah tells us, “They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their Strength, they shall mount up with Wings as Eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”—Upon God alone we must depend therefore for safety in dangerous Exigencies,—he only is a Refuge in the Time of Trouble, he alone is everlasting Salvation.—Let us, henceforth, look upon this vain World as it justly Merits, and value it according to its Worth,—Use it, but not abuse it.—Let not Appearances dazzle us, nor Pleasures sway us, but let more substantial and durable Joys take up all our Wish;—let us fly to him, who will hear our Petitions, and receive with open Arms his Servants.—May God then of his infinite Power and Mercy, order, direct, and purify our Hearts, that no Danger can

alarm, no Threats affright us.—Happy, Oh! how perfectly Happy must he be, who has constantly trod in the Path of Righteousness, who can meet Death with a Smile, welcome the decisive Summons, and with a Smile of sweet Content, bend to the awful Stroke, and launch into Eternity with Satisfaction and Pleasure,—such an one hath within his Breast that Peace of Conscience which passeth all Understanding,—such an one hath made God his Shield, under which he has laid up for himself a Treasure in Heaven, an Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.—Let us then, in a Word, draw near unto God, who has promised to his Servants, that he will never leave them nor forsake them,—let us make him our Friend, who can be a Friend indeed, and let us repose our Confidence in him, who, when all our other Friends fail, will take us to his Bosom, will embrace, cherish, and support us;—and as the Psalmist most elegantly expresses it,

shall guide us with his Counsel, and afterwards, to crown
all, receive us into unspeakable Glory.—Now to God the
Father, &c. Amen.

X

(No. 39.) 1st Chapter Zechariah, Part of Verse 3d.

"Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn
unto you."

How remarkably careful is the Lord of Hosts
ever for the Good of his unworthy Subjects?—Though they
were constantly rebelling against him, yet he was still willing
to receive them, if they only wished to be received;—And to
this End he was continually exhorting them to turn unto him,—
and in the most affectionate Terms too, as we learn from the Words
of the Text:—"Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts,
and I will turn unto you."—A most affectionate Offer! yet
it is very surprizing to find many so corrupt and degenerate
in the present Age, as not to accept it.—So unthankful are
his Creatures, and so disobedient his Subjects;—and still how
amazingly condescending is the Almighty Maker of Heaven
and Earth,—nay, with what enlarged Bowels does he many

Times yearn over his undutiful and rebellious Children.—
In one Part of Scripture he sends his Holy Prophets with
this Message to his unthinking and inconsiderate People.—
“ Turn ye,—turn ye,—why will ye die?”—And again,
out of his boundless and incomprehensible Love to Mankind,
he sends his only begotten Son out of his Bosom to invite them to
pardon;—And in the most engaging and persuasive Language
of,—“ Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy Laden,
and I will refresh you.”—Thus, in a short, but most pathetic
and affectionate Sentence, does he urge us to seek our truest
Interest,—to make ourselves fit Objects of his Love, and to
renounce that Enmity with him, which would inevitably work
our eternal Ruin.—To accomplish this Agreement between
God and Man was the Chief,—nay ultimate End of our
Saviour's coming, which he carefully and very industriously
pursued through the whole Course of this Life, and which he
frankly, though dearly purchased in his Death and

Suffering;—and that we might not be left totally comfortless, and in a sudden without Guides;—he took care to leave this Work, still to be conducted by his Holy Apostles,—which they did with very great Success, making Converts where ever they went.—After such Advantages, then, as we have, it will be necessary to shew from the Words of the Text, that all who turn not to God, are in a State of Hostility with God;—And again, how necessary it is that we should turn unto God, who by his Holy Prophet has generously promised to turn unto us.—From God's own unerring Word, it is clear, that unrepenting Sinners are his Enemies:—Says he, "I will avenge me of mine Enemies, and render Vengeance to mine Adversaries."—But the greatest Instance of Enmity is, when we enter into an Alliance with his grand Enemy the Devil.—In this dismal State of Enmity against God is the impenitent Sinner continually actuated;—engaged,—and exercised;—Here the wicked Man fights the Devil's Battles

—promotes his Designs,—and is one of his Army against the living God:—He adopts and enters into all his Interests, and is as warmly concerned for them, as his own.—His whole Wish seems to be to enlarge his Dominions, and make him absolute and universal,—and in a Word, to exalt his Name above every Thing, which is called Good.—This is very evident from his particular Attachment to the World.—Behold his Actions in the Grofs, and you will soon find that he imagines the World has been solely made for his Purpose,—never considering that it was never made for Man, nor that the Apostle assures us, “the Friendship of this World is enmity with God.”—Certainly so, when we consider how tender an Union there is between this, and the wicked Man.—His Delight or Wish never soars beyond the Ken of its Enjoyments.—His Hopes and Desires reach no farther,—he is willing to let go all Pretensions to another World, only let him be peaceful:—But take away an earthly Possession from him,—

and you see it work upon him, as if a Limb was absolutely torn from his Body:—So nearly is he connected with worldly Sweets, that they seem rather to be of one Piece,—than Friends or Companions only.—And what does the World finally in Fact do for us,—it amuses for a Time, but if not checked in its Career, it ends in deepest Misery;—Its Sweets turn Bitters,—and its choicest Balm only aggravates the Sores it has made;—And if this is the Amount of worldly Pleasures, and if all who adhere to it beyond the Bounds of Reason and Rectitude,—are Enemies to God;—Who that is endowed with common Sense would swim down its Channel?—Who would thus madly be led captive at its Will?—For if we thus turn from God,—it cannot be doubted but he will revenge the Injury, and punish us as daring Enemies.—Has he not many Times, and in express Terms told us,—“That as his tender Mercies are extended to all who fear him,—so those who will not hearken to his Voice doth his Soul abhor?”—

Indeed, God in his Nature is all Mercy,—Gentleness and Love;—He is our free and universal Benefactor,—and ever ready to bestow upon all his Creatures the unexhausted Riches of his Bounty.—But though this be the natural Tendency of his Will,—yet the impenitent Sinner obliges him, as it were, to turn his provoked Adversary, and do what he is always sorry to do;—For it is not in his Nature to exercise Severity without concern.—Since then it is a Truth, and as reasonable as true, that God is a Favourer of those who obey him,—and a severe Dealer with those, who transgress his Laws;—it is certainly our bounden Duty, by the Dictates of Self-preservation, if Nothing else could sway us, to be reconciled to God, and pursue his Dictates in every Step, as much as our Natures will allow;—For, in a Word, the whole Book of God bears ample Testimony,—His Providences and Judgments universally declare, that all wicked Men are enemies to themselves,—and in a State of Hostility with God;

—Since God is all Perfection,—all Justice and Mercy;—
It is morally Impossible that those who degrade their Natures,
by doing Acts of Injustice, and Cruelty, can ever be deemed
or supposed any Thing more than his open Enemies.—It
remains then to shew how necessary it is that we should turn
unto God, who has promised by his Holy Prophet to turn unto
us.—How bad soever our Lives have been formerly, how
much soever our Consciences feel the Guilt of Sin, yet we are
comfortably assured, that our Saviour is ever ready to grant his
Salvation to all those who turn to the Lord;—and this Con-
sideration, as it gives us the greatest Encouragement to
practise so advantageous a Duty, so it renders the Neglect
of it proportionably culpable;—evidently so, if we neglect a
Salvation tendered so freely, and so unreservedly to all repenting
Sinners without Exception.—“The Lord is not slack con-
cerning his Promise.”—The Prophet Joel tells us, that,
“Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be

delivered."—And Isaiah affirms, "The Lord will ever have Mercy on his afflicted."—Men, therefore, should never despair in the Race,—for, "the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong."—I say, Men should never despair of Mercy, because it often stops the Way to Amendment;—for as we despair of Success, so we often launch into greater Irregularities, till at last the Wound thus inflamed, becomes totally incurable.—But to have Hopes, nay Assurances of Forgiveness, should produce very contrary Effects.—And does not God proclaim his general Pardon to all his rebellious Subjects? Nay does he not entreat and beseech them to it?—Then should not such unparalleled Kindness, bring us to the most humble and willing Submission?—He must certainly be a most hardened Wretch, whom such Goodness will not bring over to Repentance, to turn to so affectionate a God, and so tender a Father, from whom he has so long departed.—A Father tender to the last Degree, for the Gospel

tells us, that it is not the Righteous only that shall have the Benefit of the Blood of Christ;—it is not to these alone, that the Mercies of the Gospel are extended, but also to the prodigal Children;—the Gates of Heaven are open even to the most Vicious, provided they are willing to shake off their sordid Dust and enter,—though ungrateful Mortals may have often and repeatedly affronted the Almighty, yet he is always ready to receive those, who are willing to turn to him;—bad as their Case may be, yet it is never desperate till they refuse to repent; for this End Christ shed his precious Blood, of which Benefits he is anxious to have his Creatures to partake.—All this the Gospel publishes and declares,—It is very just and right therefore, for us, who are so well taught, to beseech all those, who seem not to know this, to be reconciled, and turn unto God,—all may be saved if they will, for it must be with the greatest Reluctance, when infinite Justice condemns; this is clearly evident, when we consider how the Lord himself exhorts us,—says he.

"Wash you, make you clean, put away all Iniquity from before me; cease to do evil, learn to do well, and then, though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as White as Snow; though they are Red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool."—Can a rational Creature then, who ever reflects on this, can he ever reject such Invitations?—It is Impossible.—But this want of Thought is what renders the World as miserable as it is;—we never reflect, and hence never know our Danger,—we leap, but never look;—and grasp at Folly, heedless of its Consequence.—Consequence dreadful! nay fatal!—Too many there are, who rest perfectly satisfied, and think themselves safe and secure, on that bare Expression, "Whatever is, is Right." I say bare Expression, because they never suffer their Consideration to extend beyond the mere Words, not canvassing the true Intent and Meaning.—I grant, whatever is, with Regard to God, is best;—but certainly Wrong cannot be Right, neither can it have any Connection with the Deity,—In spite of all

Reasoning, Vice cannot be Virtue.—Let us, from hence, carefully pursue that Path, our heavenly Father so often invites us to;—How often does he stretch forth his Hand to keep us from falling? How often would he gather us under his Wings, as a Hen doth her Chickens, and we will not;—but if we do not sooner or later repent, and turn unto him, we shall one Day, too late, sadly wish, we had better acquainted ourselves with those Things which belonged to our Peace.—Can we do better then, than turn unto God, who has generously and candidly promised, “He will never leave us nor forsake us.”—If we do this, nothing can hurt us,—Ourselves will be our most formidable Enemies, and we shall be apprehensive of no danger from any other Quarter,—“Neither Life, nor Death, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, shall ever prevail against us.”—What then can be more persuasive to a Reconciliation with God? What Motives prevail, if these are ineffectual?—If they are, let us at least remember, that one

Day, sooner or later, whatever Ease we may at present enjoy, Sorrow or Sickness, old Age and Infirmary, Death and Judgment may overtake us;—and when this should happen, if our Consciences should tell us our Reconciliation with God is still unfinished,—How dreadful will our Case be?—for a Spirit thus wounded, who can bear?—Let us, therefore, delay no Time, but turn immediately to him, who will raise all such above the Evils of the present Life, and secure to them all the Blessings of that which is to come.—Which, that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord;—to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

X
(No. 40.) 4th Chapter Ephesians, Verse 29th.

"Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth,
but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it
may minister Grace to the Hearers."

This Sentence bespeaks the Man that uttered it, and is well worthy the Attention of Mankind;—and though it was immediately an Exhortation to the Christians at Ephesus, yet it extends itself to all later Generations of every Degree and Denomination;—And can any Thing demand or merit our Regard more?—Can any Thing better adorn and polish the Christian, than a good and pious Conversation?—And yet, notwithstanding this Privilege and Encouragement, I am sorry to observe, that there is Nothing more neglected;—If we go into Company, we find that a satyrical Talent reigns most predominant, for almost all without Exception, either do or wish to encourage it;—Indeed some are not equal to it, but what they want in Ability, they seldom

neglect to make up in Desire, — and hence they become equally as wicked, as those, who are complete Masters of this dangerous Turn. But a Man should consider that when he is enjoying himself with such Wit, or when he vainly imagines himself clever, or to amuse and attract the Attention of others, he does Nothing more than expose a weak and a bad Heart; — For our Saviour tells us, " that out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh, and " That those Things, which come out of the Mouth proceed from the Heart, and defile the Man; " — and his Reasoning is very just and obvious, because from hence they are originally formed, and have their Beginning; — It behoves us therefore to set a Watch upon our Mouths, to consider how every Thing that is likely to proceed therefrom, may terminate; — In order to stop the Progress of what may tend to evil, — and carefully guard the Avenues to and from the Heart: — The Necessity of this is very manifest, — because Words are generally allowed the best Inter-

preters of our Thoughts, and impartially discover the inward Sentiments of the Man.—Nay, they often, and almost infallibly disclose the secret Desires, Inclinations, and Dispositions of Men, as clear and evident as their Actions,—And doubtless we shall be summoned to account for what we say, as well as for what we do; and therefore a particular Attention should be paid to every Sentence we utter;—For our Saviour tells us, "that for every idle Word that Men shall speak, it shall be accounted for in the Day of Judgment;"—Hence it is a certain Indication of a wise and good Man, to be particularly careful, where, when, how, and before whom he speaks.—Most Men are sometimes betrayed into dangerous Company; such, who pretend to be their Friends, and yet take every Opportunity to use them ill in their unguarded Moments;—And again, I doubt not many of us enter voluntarily into Company and Conversation, where, though we least think it, we ought to be very prudent, how, and w^hat

we say.—And how to manage this, we are well advised by the Apostle in the Words of the Text:—"Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers."—That is, we should avoid and abstain from that which is corrupt, viz. lewd,—filthy,—and immodest Conversation;—And cultivate,—cherish,—and practise,—that which is good to the Use of edifying, viz. Words, that are pious, wholesome, salutary, and virtuous;—Such as will tend to the Good and Improvement of those who hear us, and to the Honor and Credit of ourselves;—And such as are of such a Nature and Composition, as will be grateful,—acceptable, and courted by all Mankind in general.—Let Men, therefore, think seriously on this,—let them turn the Topic of Discourse more upon religious Matters, and particularly at set Times, and those vacant Hours, set a Part for private Conversation;—and when Religion is the Theme, let it be canvassed candidly,

not for the Sake of Wrangling and Dispute, but for the necessary Business of Instruction and Improvement in all moral Virtues, it tends altogether this Way, and was wisely contrived for this Purpose, and therefore, it were a Pity, it was not consigned, at all Times, and in all Places, to the Use it was first meant for by the great and universal Maker of all Things; but how seldom is Religion spoke of in a practical Way, so as to influence and effect the Practice of Men;—to make them in Love with the Duties of a holy Life, the Works of Piety and Virtue, and in a Word, to have an anxious and reverent Esteem for it?—Seldom, too seldom is this the Case.—Indeed, I cannot see any great Impropriety in innocent Amusements, provided they are kept within regular and seasonable Bounds.—Nay, I am rather an Advocate for them on many Accounts;—Because they may divert Melancholy,—preserve Society,—and cherish that brotherly Love and Affection, which otherwise might sink in Oblivion, and be for ever forgot.—R

where Amusements are mingled with the profane, they then cease to be such, as I have here recommended, and become rather pernicious than useful, and must be totally disgusting to all chaste and pious Dispositions:—Hence, a good Conversation is required of us at all Times, though it is not always respecting the great Concernments of another Life:—For a Man of a defiled,—impure, and a wicked Conversation is dangerous to the last Degree:—Particularly so, when we consider the Frailty of our Natures, and how prone we are to imitate any evil or vicious Custom.—I doubt not we all well know that one bad Sheep may endanger a large and an extensive Flock;—So likewise a bad Man, where he has any Power and Influence in a Neighbourhood, and where such an one is Master of a fluent Language, may oft Times win over many to his own wicked Persuasion, and hence render them equally as vile as himself.—

And further, let me observe to you the Reasonableness and

Advantage of religious Conversation;—Every one will, and must allow, that Religion and the Affairs of our eternal Salvation, are Subjects that demand our most serious Attention. —Consider, the Life to come is for ever, and it totally depends on our own Behaviour here, whether it will be of Happiness or Misery;—here is our Place of Probation and Trial, and God, who governs all, has left this Part to our own Management to improve or disuse it as we please.—Since then our gracious Maker has thus voluntarily put the Reins in our own Hands;—Pray, is it his Fault, if we govern them to disadvantage? By no Means.—We may think, say, or do what we please, taking this along with us, that a Day of Reckoning will come, and we know not how soon, in which we must give a fair and an impartial Account of our Conduct here, and be answerable for the Consequence of all our Misdoings. —Let our Conversation, therefore, be for the Use of edifying; —though our Language cannot be called profane, yet if it is

confined to worthless Things, though not in the least hurtful, we cannot be said to employ it to the best Advantage, or exercise our utmost Endeavours to please God;—If we do no ill, yet do no good, and at the same Time have it in our Power;—What thank have we?—We cannot be deemed profitable Servants.—Religion, therefore, is the best Topic of Discourse, provided it is handled seriously and with due Reverence;—It is the greatest Comfort, and may justly be termed the Perfection of human Nature;—it is the greatest Comfort of it, because it tends to, nay infallibly procures us the Veneration and Esteem, the Respect and Love of Mankind;—and it is the Perfection of human Nature, because it comes nearest the Dictates of divine Wisdom, and is the solidest Foundation of that Tranquility, and Peace of Mind we are capable of on this Side Heaven.—Is it not, therefore, well worthy the Attention, and too precious to be committed to the Shades of Oblivion, and buried in the Depths of profound Silence?—For he, who

considers it coolly and impartially, must see that it is the Perfection of our Nature, and the solid Ground of our present and future Happiness.—But what will the common Discourse of the Day produce us? I mean, such as, at present is much too general, (viz.) Common Swearing,—I say general, because we meet with it in some Degree, either less or more, almost in every Company;—Indeed, I have met with some Exceptions, but very few, and some have it in such Perfection, and use it so repeatedly, and with such seeming Degree of Pleasure, that they would almost persuade us, that it was rather an Accomplishment, and displayed a masterly Knowledge of the English Language;—but have such ever read, or ever heard, that it was a strict Injunction of our Saviour? “I swear not at all,”—and again, “Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in Vain, for the Lord will not hold him Guiltless that taketh his Name in Vain.”—I shall only further observe on this Head, that common Swearing and Blasphemy do not

more than degrade the Man, and make him justly contemptible in the Eye of moral Virtue;—for to speak as favourably as possible of them, we cannot but condemn them; as wicked and crying Sins, and the ugliest and vilest Strains of Conversation.—Let it then, my beloved, be the Study of our Conversation to turn chiefly upon Matters of the weightiest, and highest Importance, such as relate to the Felicity of our immortal Souls, and such as have an innate Goodness and Beauty in themselves, without Blemish and free from Fault;—and should our Discourse ever turn upon Business, as it unavoidably must sometimes, let it be in such a Manner, as to require no after Considerations and Explanation;—let it be fair and honest, harmless and useful,—undesigning and just,—and such, according to the Purport of the Discourse, as is absolutely Necessary;—because, whatever is beyond this, is contrary to the Rules of a good Heart, and betrays a wicked Disposition;—for, it is very wisely and justly observed, that “Out of the

Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh;" — And as this is the Case, how careful should we be in forming our Lives and Manners? — Let our Words testify the Dictates of a good Conscience, to the Use of edifying and ministering Grace to the Hearers; — let our chief Business be in caring for, and securing the Happiness of the Soul, by practising the Virtues of Goodness, and Christian Graces, the Fruits of which are everlasting Joy and Peace; — so great is our Encouragement in religious Conversation, — so reasonable and advantageous, that one would almost conclude, there was no Need to urge the Necessity of it; — indeed, it seems a very obvious and reasonable Remark, that good Men abstain from religious Conferences, totally on Account of the Contempt they meet with in the World; — but they should consider, that where they meet with these Rebuffs and Checks in their Christian Progress, it is only in the Company of very bad Men; — Men of loose Principles, and looser Morals, — and the Despite of such Men is much

more desirable than their Praise;—for if you observe, in general, the Commendations of a bad Man, do much more Injury than Benefit.—In a Word, then, let our Company be confined to the Society of the good;—let our Deportment be seemly and innocent;—let our Professions and Occupations be conscientiously conducted;—and let every Communication that proceeds from our Lips be so judiciously composed, as to be for the Use of edifying, and the ministering Grace to the Hearers;—which, that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord;—to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

X.

(No. 41.)

1st Epistle Corinthians, 9th Chapter, Verse 24th.

" So run that you may obtain."

Obtain what?—'Tis no less than a Crown of everlasting Glory that is set before you;—'Tis no less than everlasting Happiness we have to run for;—Who will not therefore engage in the Race?—The Importance is great,—and the Reasonableness obvious.—The Apostle here wishes the Corinthians to adhere faithfully to the Doctrine of Christ, and zealously to seek the Promises and Rewards of his Gospel,—and to obtain which he very wisely, and with great Propriety, compares the Christian Religion to a Race,—and warmly, and with brotherly Affection admonishes his Hearers, " so to run that they may obtain;"—That is, Men, who profess Christianity, should take Care not to degrade their Profession, by submitting to Things beneath the Dignity of their Calling. They should be just and honest;—fair and undesigning;—

They should bend to the greatest Inconveniencies for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake;—And when it happened that their Neighbour's Happiness was dependent in a great Measure on their Decision and Pleasure,—what should they refuse to do?—Nothing;—But sad Example tells us, that too many are often much readier to injure than to do a Service,—and if our Happiness depended on their Decision, we should be miserable indeed; but it is a particular Kindness of Heaven conferred on mortal Man, that he is not always left in the Power of such;—For "God is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works;"—And hence, those who follow his Steps, and enter in the Race that leadeth to the Glories of his Kingdom, he will not suffer to run in Vain:—Though he may sometimes allow good Men to be overthrown and meet with Afflictions in Life, yet these are for such wise Purposes, as it becomes us not to murmur at, but to bear with Patience:

If they are to try our Integrity only, Providence is still

less liable to censure,—for the Consequence is,—If we bear them patiently, as becometh Christians, we will at last be entitled to a brighter Gem in the celestial Crown.—Let us not therefore be weary in well doing;—Let us not tire in the Race of our Profession;—if we are called Christians,—let us not be ashamed to run the Race of Christians;—Indeed one would hardly think it necessary to urge this,—being blessed with so many very forcible Encouragements to quicken us in it,—and make us emulous to excel in our religious Progress.—But before I proceed further, I think it will not be unnecessary to set before you the Reason why St: Paul made use of the Expression, “so run that you may obtain.”;—By which the true Meaning may be much illustrated, and consequently of greater Use and Benefit to the Hearers.—When St. Paul wrote this Epistle to the Corinthians it was a Custom once in five Years to give certain Prizes to the best Performers of certain Games or Exercises, which were of five Kinds,

—three of them St. Paul particularly mentions, (viz.) Wrestling, Boxing, and Running,—the last of which he immediately alludes to in the Words of the Text,—When he saw what Preparations were made, and how eager each Opponent was for Success, he thought it a Pity that they were not employed in a more profitable Race;—He observed that indeed by these they purchased a Crown; but of what?—A Composition of Leaves only;—An Honor 'tis true;—But a mere Temporary one,—and which at best was obtained by a Work of Vanity, and terminated in a very worthless Acquisition. —“ For what shall a Man profit, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul? ”—And what further added to the Folly of their Pursuit, was the certain Knowledge, that all of them, though never so well prepared, could not gain the Race;—They might all run, but one only could obtain the Prize, and the Respect and Applause of the People:—Hence the Apostle very opportunely made use of the Words of

the Text,—“So run that you may obtain,”—That is, that you may ALL obtain;—and certainly it was a most reasonable Request,—when we consider the End;—His Intention was to move them to lay out equal Industry and the like unwearied Zeal in a Race of the greatest Consequence and Concern:—Where there was no doubt of losing, and where the Prize was in itself much more noble, and infinitely more valuable;—And which all, if they would, might easily enjoy without any Deduction of either Worth or Weight;—And can Man foolishly, and with Pleasure suffer many Inconveniences, in Respect to the Body, to prepare him for any earthly Exploit;—And which, if he gains his Purpose, can little enhance him in real Worth?—Can he do these Things,—and not lay out one Endeavour to obtain that, which would infallibly, and for ever raise him in the Esteem both of God and Man?—But, my beloved, let me remind you, that it not only becomes you, but is your bounden Duty to subdue your Lust.

—to curb your Appetites,—and deny yourselves of many earthly Enjoyments,—for the Prize of your high Calling;—The Salvation of your Souls.—You should follow the Example of St. Paul the Apostle, have always the Goal in View, and run with all your Might in your Christian Course and spiritual Race;—And thus you will be entitled to and near at last one general Crown;—For though some may far out do others, yet if every one runs to the utmost of his Ability, your Rewards shall be equally great:—But further, let us enquire a little more particularly into the Nature and Difference between the Rewards of a temporal and a spiritual Race;—And this we are briefly told in the Words immediately following the Text:—They that prepare for the Race in the Grecian Games, do it merely to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we, in the Christian Course, run to obtain an incorruptible one, that fadeth not away, eternal in the Heavens,—and there is certainly a vast Disproportion between the Excellency and

Dignity of the one, and that of the other;—and therefore, I think it cannot be deemed unreasonable to urge, that our Preparation and Zeal for the Acquisition of each should be accordingly;—their different Natures should be truly stated and searched into, and hence we should govern our Actions agreeable to the intrinsic Value they seem, or can be judged to have.—Now Men that prepared themselves for the Race in the Olympic Games, spared no Pains,—no Cost,—suffered the most acute Severities, and went through the highest Drudgery to fit them to win the Prize, and the Value of the Crown conferred on the Victor, was merely imaginary, and afforded nothing substantial to recommend it to the particular Notice of Men;—while that reserved for true Believers in Christianity is certain and permanent, independent on the fickle Humours, and not liable to be tainted by the Wills and Ways of Men;—the former, though composed of the firmest Bandages, was at best of corruptible and perishing Materials;—yet this was the full Expectation

and bare Reward of the stoutest and most active Champion, that ever entered or appeared in the Field;—there was no higher Recompence in View for the Hazard, and oft Times the Loss of Life and Limbs;—and when this was gained, pray where was its Blessings? Where its Satisfaction, even in the fullest Possession and Enjoyment? A thousand Accidents threaten its Destruction;—but give it its longest Scope, the utmost Art and Care cannot preserve it long;—but the latter, the incorruptible Crown, knows no Frailty, nor is subject to the least Decay.—St. Paul was well assured, that his Labours,—his voluntary Denials,—his Struggles and Combats for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake, would be well rewarded.—He had a firm and unshaken Hope of obtaining the glorious Promises made to the Obedience and Perseverence of faithful Christians;—and this he kept always in View, so that he ran in his Christian Course, not uncertainly, but sure of his Prize;—and hence he exclaims in Raptures, “ I have fought a good

*Fight, — I have finished my Course, — I have kept the Faith,
— henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day;
— and not to me only, but to all those that love his appearing ;”*

*And none shall be excluded from sharing in the same Blessing,
that run as he did in the Christian Race, after everlasting Glory.*

*Let us then, my beloved, set his Practice and Prescription always
before us ; — do as he did, as much as possible, and no doubt we
shall obtain the promised Rewards. — As those that run in a
Race, fit and prepare themselves diligently for it, sparing
no Pains ; — so let us as diligently prepare for, and eagerly
run in the Christian Race ; — it is well known they use their
utmost Endeavours and Activity ; — they do not indifferently
look after the Prize they aim at, they set it always before them,
and eagerly catch at every Advantage that may facilitate the
Course they have engaged in ; — it is Majesty and Pre-eminence
they propose, and they leave no Means untried to accomplish*

their Purposes;—Regardless of Ease, and prodigal of Pains, they stop at no Hardships to attain their End, and bear away the Rewards of their careful Endeavours;—and these are mere Shadows, set in Competition with those promised by Heaven to the Christian Racer.—What a Shame is it, therefore, for us to be slothful and indifferent in Pursuits of the highest Importance, and with seeming Pleasure to waste the best of Spirits, and all imaginable Degrees of Courage in Matters of trifling Significancy? Can we, with the utmost Ardour and Zeal, pursue Things frail and fleeting, and not suffer one Thought to turn upon those of infinitely greater Concern, except occasionally, or by mere Chance? And can there be a more glaring Instance of Simplicity and Folly, than thus to prefer Things of little Use and Moment, and wilfully forbear to employ the smallest Industry after, or to be in a Manner nothing concerned for the "one Thing needful."—Let us, therefore, run vigorously, if we expect to obtain, and

if we hope to enter in at the strait Gate, let us strive powerfully, for, " narrow and intricate is the Way that leadeth to Life, while that to Destruction is broad and easy, and many, too many there be, that enter therein." — This shows how careful we ought to be, lest we miss the true Road that leadeth to Life, and to make us careful, it is very necessary we should always set before us the Consequence, which is, that the one leadeth to eternal Misery, the other to everlasting Joy and Bliss. — Let us then, without reserve, and with unfeigned and sincere Obedience, follow the Commands and Dictates of the Gospel; — we are none of us ignorant of the Benefits and Privileges it proposeth; — nor are we Strangers to the Ways and Means to obtain them. — Let us, therefore, like the Apostle, be consistent in all Things, make Resignation a Virtue, and govern our Passions with so absolute a Command, as to be always firm and stable against all evil Temptations, and hence fit us for that everlasting Crown of Glory, promised by our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ;—if we by Accident fall, let us rise with double and stronger Views of Amendment;—thus our Vigilance and Perseverance, our Regularity and Submission, our Care and Obedience, will doubtless Crown our Hopes, and render our most sanguine Expectations complete;—and then in the true Sense of the Words, we shall so run as to obtain;—which that we may all do, God grant;—to whom with the Son and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

X

(No. 42.) 12th Chapter Ecclesiastes, Verse 1st.

“Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth,
while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh,
when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.”

It is well known that human Nature is frail, and Life uncertain; the greatest Philosophers of the Age, or that ever lived, could never measure the true Length of their Days, though but a Span.—We see daily Men of all Ages descend to the Grave,—Infants,—hopeful, vigorous Youths, and gray Hairs, all without Distinction yield to Death;—Yet, strange to observe, though these Examples are continually exhibited before us;—And though many more die Young than live to three Score Years and ten,—yet Mankind in general promise themselves a long Life.—All expect it, though few attain it;—While we have Health, we forget that our Life is dependent on a Thread, and that every Da-

may be our Last;—we forget that many by promising themselves a long Life have fallen into mischievous Snares:—Because it is possible they may live long, they will not prepare themselves for Death,—but giddily pursue the destructive Flights of Pleasure, at the Hazard of their Being;—But let such know that it is as likely their Lives may be short, as it is probable they may be long;—Let them not, therefore, set the Practice of Religion aside at present, because, as they vainly imagine, they shall have Time enough hereafter to take care of their Souls. These, I am afraid, are the Reflections of too many; however their Practices tell us so:—For many we see apply themselves wholly to the Pleasures of this transitory Life, and never think of Reformation or Religion till seized by old Age.—And thus, while they suppose they have Time enough to spend, they have unthinkingly squandered it away,—and bartered the Salvation of their Souls, for the transient Pleasures of a few fleeting years,—Alas! their Time is spent, and grim Death (not

enquiring if they are ready) seizes them in the Midst of their worldly Enjoyments, and Vulture like, with its relentless Jaws, swallows them up into Eternity.—Eternity! thou pleasing,—dreadful Thought!—Pleasing to the highest Degree, when we can promise ourselves the Rewards of the Just; but dreadful beyond all Description, where Reflection presents to us a Life spent in Wickedness and Folly.—“Remember then thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.”—This is the best Preparative against the evil Days to come, against that Time when many declare,—“We have no Pleasure in them.”—In those Days, when we will infallibly have Occasion for all the Advantages, that a religious Course of Life can afford.—We must, therefore, often think upon God, and enquire into his Revelations:—Consider that he is a Rewarder of those that diligently seek him;—That he is a Being, Infinite,—Eternal,—Good and Just,—Wise and Almighty;—And that he is not only our Creator; but the Creator and

Preserver of all Things,—for says he himself,—“The World is mine and the Fulness thereof.”—And the holy Psalmist informs us, that—“we are his People and the Sheep of his Pasture.”—He must therefore be our eternal Lawgiver and Judge, and consequently will expect his rational Creatures to imitate those Laws, he of his infinite Goodness, has been pleased to set before them; certainly it is the just Duty of frail, dependent, poor Mortals, to pay every possible tribute to that Power, which first gave them Reason, and then was condescending enough to instruct them in the Use of it.—Let us, therefore, duly listen to the Counsels of Heaven,—and steadily pursue that Tract Providence has set before us.—Let us think upon God betimes, even in the Midst of our worldly Concerns,—let serious Thoughts usher in the Day, and at Night let Sleep steal upon our Minds reflecting on the boundless Goodness of divine Mercy.—Again,—Are we Creatures immediately under the Care of God?—Then let us duly set

apart his Sabbaths, and worship him upon them.—Kneel to him in humble Reverence and submissive Obedience,—and dread his Majesty and Greatness.—We must love him above all Things, and desire his Favour as our chiefest Good;—We must delight in his Holiness, and endeavour to conform to his fatherly Pleasure:—And all these Things, as Solomon advises, should be performed in Youth,—as soon as we are capable and have Opportunity;—Let not Procrastination be our Theme,—this is a treacherous Thief, and will insensibly steal away all our Time;—But let us, with the first Exercises of our Reason, learn to know God and his Laws:—With the first Actions of our Wills we should choose him for our first and chief Good,—and depend upon his Laws as our best Guide and Rule,—and with strict Attention carefully pursue them.—Such Pursuits are conducted with the greatest Ease, and I am sure, nay, they cannot fail of yielding abundant Pleasure to the Pursuer;—Certainly to set our prime Affe

tions upon him, who is the very Fountain of Joys, must be productive of much more Ease to us,—much more solid and substantial Happiness,—than if we should giddily copy the Customs,—the Fashions and Maxims of a foolish and rich World;—Let us, therefore, freely give him our Hearts, before the Deceits of a subtle World have got Possession.—This is not only what the wise Man advises; but what every devout Man must wish;—And certainly it is a most excellent Preparative for the evil Days to come.—These evil Days, according to Solomon in the Verses immediately following the Text, seem to be those of old Age;—And certainly this Period is justly so called, on Account of that Decay of Nature, which often attends it:—Then we see a Consumption over the whole Frame: All the Faculties and Powers give way;—The mortal Body begins to fail;—The Beauty of it is withered and fled, and the Strength much exhausted;—The Eye loses its Lustre and is dim,—and the susceptible Ear grows dull;—The feeble

Feet now loose their Activity, and the trembling Hands forget their wonted Use.—In Short, the human Body becomes a Burthen to itself, and the old Man becomes, as it were, a second Child;—Thus he is taken from Action and Business, which justly made him noticed and considerable in the World, and rendered him merited, esteemed, and respected;—but what still adds to the Miserableness of his Situation is, that he perhaps now sees himself forgotten and forsaken;—he sees those, he has been kind to, prove ungrateful,—and those he has nourished and brought up, grown weary of him;—This is too often the Case, and that Time, which a Man so situated, continues further, may reasonably be termed an evil Time.—Again, Sickness often confines a Man to his Chamber, and makes him a Prisoner at Home;—Pain wears out his Days, and makes him wish for Night, and when Night has continued a while, he wishes for Day;—thus he has no Comfort in his Days, nor P

in his Nights;—and what now farther increases his Uneasiness is, the certain approach and nearness of Death;—It cannot then be at a great Distance, and he knows that his miserable Days will soon end in a final Dissolution;—from his Bed of Sickness, ere long, he shall return to his mother Earth and kindred Clay;—Alas! his best Days are irretrievably gone, and he must never return to the Health and Vigour, Mirth and Jollity of Youth again;—and when upon the Verge of Death, the dying Mortal shall thus exclaim, “Must I? Ay, too sure I must, and shortly too, quit the pleasant Things I here possess, and depart into a new and unknown World, from whence none return to tell what is there.” A sad and melancholy Reflection, and particularly to him, who forgot his Creator in the Days of his Youth;—a Neglect, fatal at every Period;—for we well know that impartial Death visits the Palace, as well as the Cottage, and raps at “Doors of Youth, as well as those of old Age.—How

dreadful must it be, therefore, to be unprepared at his coming? How dangerous the Consequence? Neither good Words nor Bribery will satisfy him one Moment, but what he calls for must be granted;—How desirable then is a virtuous Course begun at an early Period? This will provide us a good Habit of Body, and settle and confirm a good Constitution;—Nature is cherished by Virtue and Temperance, while violent Passions weaken and destroy it.—Why then are we so remiss, as not to follow that Rule, which directs to the Preservation of our Health, and helps to prolong our Lives? And what adds Pleasure to the Enjoyment of Health, is, the Reflection of a well-spent Life;—Reflection that lays before us a good Conscience, must necessarily allay the Troubles and Concerns which naturally follow a wicked Life.—How pleasant is it when an old Man, upon Self-examination, can speak thus to himself, “I have lived according to Reason; and as becomes a Man,—I cannot be ashamed of my Life,—no Person can reproach

me, except he is prompted by Malice or Envy;—the Thoughts of Death do not alarm me,—nay, I shall rather rejoice at its approach;—For, I can justly say, I have fought a good Fight,—I have kept the Faith,—I have finished my Course,—and henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness;—I shall leave a Land of Care, only to meet with never fading Pleasures,—durable Riches,—and Joys unspeakable,—ere long my Pains shall cease, and my Troubles shall have an End;—I shall be removed from amongst those, who are wickedly weary of me,—to dwell with those, who will rejoice to receive me.”—Thus then we may fairly conclude, that a good and virtuous Life in Youth, is the best Preparative for the Inconveniences of old Age;—and should it not be our Lot to live out a Number of Years, we are happy to ~~think~~ that we are fit to die;—this renders the Death-bed easy, and the Approach of a sudden Change supportable, if not unavoidable.—Let us not then, my beloved, greedily follow the

Pleasures and Enjoyments of this transient World, or betake Ourselves to the eager Pursuit of Riches;—for how often do such Pursuits terminate in Vexation, Trouble, and perhaps in Destruction? Those, who give themselves up to Pleasures, treasure up nothing but Sorrow and Shame. And what is the End? Pleasures often leave behind an impaired Estate, a sick distempered Body, and a guilty Conscience;—and when a Man reflects that he has bartered the most solid and durable Matters, for a Life of mere Vanity, what bitter Anguish must he feel? His Thoughts will be sad and tremendous.—None are so melancholy and discontented in old Age, as those, who have run the Race of Licentiousness and Debauchery;—they smart for their Days of Frolick, and feel the grievous Effects of heedless Folly.—Such are thy Trophies, oh, baneful Pleasure! And if we view the Covetous, the Pursuer of Wealth, though the Appearance is somewhat better, yet the Difference is small;—he that pursues Riches, does not always attain ther

—They have Wings, and will often fly before us as a Shadow, and elude our Grasp;—but should we get them, Will they alleviate the natural Pains and Distempers of old Age? Will they remove us from the Grave, or keep Death one Moment longer from us? Will they purchase Peace with God, or save us from Destruction? No, they will rather aggravate our Guilt, and increase our Damnation.—Such is the End of Riches and Pleasures;—their Sweets turn Bitters, and their Abundance ends in Poverty and Nakedness;—but the good Man closes up a Life of Trouble with Joy and Gladness;—If he has received any good Things here, he knows that far better are stored up for him in Heaven;—and that he is leaving a Land of Misery, to enjoy unspeakable Pleasures for ever and ever.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

X

(No. 43.) 23d Chapter Numbers, Verse 10th.

" Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last
End be like his."

This Desire of Balaam is a very natural Wish of all Mankind at the Hour of Death, or even on reflecting upon a future State and the Consequences of an ill or well spent Life;—All wish to die like the Virtuous, though few are at the Pains of living virtuously;—Here Balaam reflecting on his Disobedience to God,—considering how desirous he had been to curse the Children of Israel, for the Sake of large Promises made to him by Balak, King of Moab;—He thus looking back upon himself exclaims,—“ Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.”—A very natural Wish, and particularly to him who has led rather a wicked than a pious Life;—For Death is a serious Consideration,—a Debt that all must pay without Distin-

tion,—and the Consequence is an Eternity of Misery or Joy.—In discoursing then upon the Words of the Text I shall endeavour to shew what Death is, what it is to die the Death of the Righteous, and how reasonable such a Request is.—Death then is a Dissolution of Nature, or; more strictly, a Separation of Soul and Body, by which the active Principle within us, ceases to perform its usual Motions and Operations,—it leaves its beautiful Habitation, and the Body, then liable to Putrefaction, is reduced to its primitive Dust; and though the Manner of this Separation is wisely hid from human Penetration, yet, we are well assured, that it is appointed for all Men once to die,—and that there is an infinite Number of Causes and Accidents to bring it about.—Accidents in a Moment, we know not where,—how,—or when;—Without the least Warning,—and we are obliged in the Twinkling of an Eye to surrender our Breath to him that first bestowed it;—And to these Circumstances all Flesh is

subject,—all Mankind are liable to undergo and suffer;—
Yet indeed where Men consider Death as only putting a
Period to their entire Existence;—In this Case it is no very
terrible and frightful Thing, because all know it is unavoidable,
and what no one can possibly escape, and therefore a Debt
that every one must pay.—None can plead an Exemption
from it,—nor can Life be prolonged beyond its Limits;—
But if we look beyond the Grave, as every one ought, then the
Departure of the Soul from the Body becomes terrible and
serious;—For without the Soul, that is, the rational and
immaterial Faculties, the Body becomes void of all Sensation
and Use:—And again, the Soul, without the Body, imme-
diately enters upon an Eternity of Happiness or Misery;
—And hence Death, in both these Respects, becomes a very for-
midable Consideration;—And further, the Body greatly
dreadeth Death, because it robs it of its Height and Supre-
macy of all sublunary Creatures, divests it of this distinguished

and heavenly Character, and places it upon a Level with the Brutes that perish, and when Man thinks thus of his Honor being laid in the Dust, he consequently will dread the Approach of so great and powerful an Enemy to his Glory and Excellence.—Thus, it is to die, or this is the very Act of dying itself.—Again,—When we begin to reflect upon Death in its Approach naturally, and as it is in common,—when Nature is worn out by Age, or sinking under acute Pains, and languishing Disease;—In this Situation Men are apt to be terrified and affrighted:—When long and severe Complaints weaken the Constitution, and impair the Health of the Body, so as totally to destroy its Liveliness and Activity, and determine at length its Existence;—Death in this Situation may justly be alarming; particularly so when the Arrest is not sudden, and grievous Symptoms of its Approach stare us, as it were, some Weeks and Months in the face;—Yet still there is another Consideration, which too commonly

adds Horror to, and increaseth the Uneasiness of a dying Hour; which is, that it parts us for ever from the Wealth, the Honors,—and Enjoyments of this Life;—But these Fears would seldom occur, did we consider how frail and fleeting the most indulged and adored Satisfactions of Sense are;—For the greatest Pleasures of Sin,—the richest Titles,—and the highest Honors that ever Man possessed, are but for a short,—short Season;—And must all submit to the devouring Grave, and the relentless Jaws of Death.—Is this then the Case?—What signify then all the Riches and Honors human Nature can boast of, or arrive at, if we neglect the one Thing needful?—What signify all the glittering Amusements, and mean temporary Gratifications of this World, if we neglect our Duty to God, and disqualify ourselves for a Share in his Kingdom?—When we leave this World, it will be of little, very little Consequence, what Power we have had here;—But it will be of the highest Concern how we have used or a

it; by this our Sentence shall be pronounced irretrievable, never to be altered;—If to the Glory of God,—this shall be our pleasing and welcome Reception into the Mansions of Futurity. —“ Come ye blessed Children of my Father receive a Crown of everlasting Glory, prepared for you from the Foundation of the World;” —But if contrary to his divine Pleasure, how vastly opposite and dreadful will it be;—“ Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.” —Thus have I shewn you what Death is in itself;—How it is in its Approach,—End,—Consequences,—and as accompanied with a Multitude of Terrors,—Fears,—and Doubts; And if in all these Cases it appears a very formidable and dreadful Adversary to human Nature, it behoves us still the more to guard against its various Attacks, and dangerous Encounters—And Nothing will answer this Purpose so effectually as a religious and virtuous Course of Life,—By this
“ ‘t we shall learn to meet Death with a Smile, and

a calm, undisturbed Mind;—Which leads me more at large to set before you what it is to die the Death of the Righteous, and have our last End like his.—It is an undoubted Certainty that Death is natural, and that it pays no more Respect to the Righteous, than the Wicked;—and that the most eminent Men for Piety and Holiness, shall suffer in the common Dissolution, as well as the most profligate and licentious Sinner upon Earth;—neither will the highest Degree of Virtue and Godliness privilege a Man from painful Disease, nor exempt him from sudden Accidents, and unseen Dangers;—to these all are alike Heirs and Co-heirs;—the Wise,—the Foolish,—the Good,—the Impious,—the Clean,—and Unclean.—Lazarus, who was carried to Abraham's Bosom, was a very odious Spectacle, full of Sores, dreadful to the Sight, and ended his Days in the extremest Misery and Want;—while the rich Man, enjoyed his Plenty of Luxury, Riot, and Pleasures, and who was tormented in the Flames of H

yet he only grew Sick and died;—and thus holy Martyrs have expired with Tortures and Racks;—while their Prosecutors died seemingly easy and composed.—Since then Death, in all its Ways and Means, is common to all, and we know not when, nor how, it behoves us so to live, as finally to meet it with real Pleasure.—Let us, therefore, without delay, set our Affections on Things above, and not on earthly Objects, and in this Situation, at our Exit, we will find we have Nothing to fear, because we are leaving a World wherein there is nothing worth our Care, and consequently we have nothing to loose.—If then we are favoured with the Blessings of Life, let us behold them as they really are, as the gracious Gifts of God, and accordingly use them as Instruments of his Glory and Praise;—if we consider, in themselves, they are but empty and unsatisfactory, by no Means productive of the least solid Content, however they may delude and flatter us into a fond
Opinion,—false Opinion,—and greedy Embraces of them.—

Let us then seriously consider this grand Truth, and I am verily persuaded our Pursuits after them will in a great Degree be moderated and abated;—and hence when we are for ever separated, we shall not find any material Commotion of Grief, or Uneasiness at the Consequence, well knowing that they are but uncertain in the Possession, and perishing in their Nature;—but further, as Death is the End of this Life, so it is the Beginning of another, that will endure for ever throughout all Ages;—and in this Life, we shall well know what it is to die the Death of the Righteous.—Here Impartiality shall fill the Scale of unerring Justice, and the Just, however low their Condition here, shall far outstrip and eclipse the Honor and Greatness of the Wicked;—though he has here, eat nothing but the Bread of Carefulness, and known little but the Effects of Misfortune's dreary Gloom;—yet in Futurity he shall raise his long declining Head above the Men of the World, and triumph over them;—and justly shall he do it, because in this

Life he was obedient to his God, and made his Law his delight and Counsellor;—he receives his last Summons with infinite Pleasure, having a well grounded Assurance, that he is beginning an Eternity of Happiness, and a blessed Immortality;—and this it is to die the Death of the Righteous, and to have our last End like his;—does it not follow, therefore, that a request to die so is grounded upon the most solid Principles of Reason?—Look what Agonies generally attend the wicked dying Sinner, and behold the Righteous on his Deathbed;—the one is visited with every horrid Suggestion of an evil Conscience;—while the latter knows Nothing of the Dread of Death, further than what the Infirmary of the Flesh is unavoidably Heir to;—it is full of the Joys of Heaven and Happiness;—and pray, what can be equal to the Consolation of that Man, who, in his departing Minutes, can assure himself of the Favour of his God;—who can look backward, and behold a well spent Life,—a long Course of virtuous Deeds

and Actions, that become the Man and the Christian;—and who can look forward into Eternity, and behold a celestial Prospect of brightest Splendor, and unequalled Glory, surpassing all that Pen can paint, or the most penetrating Idea imagine. Hereupon he resigns his Soul to God, as into the Hands of a most faithful Creator,—his Mind is calm,—his Peace sure,—and Comfort unspeakable,—and he dies in a full View of future Blessings and settled Expectations of endless Felicities;—knowing, that though his earthly Tabernacle shall shortly be dissolved, “He hath to receive a Building of God, not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.”—Let us, then, my beloved, so live, that like the Righteous, we may not fear, but rejoice at, and welcome the Messenger of Death;—thus, we shall have Comfort here, and Happiness hereafter;—we shall enjoy Peace of Mind,—Peace of Conscience,—be at Peace with all the World,—and finally die in Peace;—so true does the royal Psalmist observe, “Mark the perfect Man, and behold

the upright, for the End of that Man is Peace." — Since then a religious Life is thus happy in the Conclusion, let us not fail to live soberly, piously, and honestly in this World,—it is all that is required of us, and I think a very easy and reasonable Task;—and thus, and thus only, we shall die the Death of the Righteous, and our last End shall be like his. — Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

x

(No. 44.) 2d Timothy, 3d Chapter, Verse 16th.

"All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness."

This evidently discovers, and proves to us, that there has been, and is still upon Record a Revelation of God's Will and Purposes;—And in both his Epistles to Timothy, St. Paul labours much to instruct him in this divine Truth, and exhorts him to Constancy and Perseverance in Preaching the Word;—This he well knew would not be done without much Trouble and Opposition.—The Business was new and weighty, and consequently much Danger was unavoidably to be expected in the Prosecution of it.—St. Paul tells us, that in the last Days perilous Times would come, when Persecutions would arise because of the Word of God.—These Afflictions he himself had many Times already endured, and he assures Timothy, that those who were to succeed him in

the Propagation of the same Design, were to expect the like Inconveniences.—Such was the Perverseness of that Generation, that however strong were the Arguments,—however nervous the Propositions,—and however glaring the Truth of the Doctrine set forth,—yet many would still reproach and oppose it.—But though this Opposition was very spiritedly supported, and by very able Disputers, yet, by being founded on a bad Principle, we are happy to see it fall to the Ground,—sink as it were into Annihilation, and give way to that Word, which was indited by the direct Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.—To prove that the Scripture was given by Inspiration of God, I need only observe, how stupid, ignorant, and consequently wicked we must have been, without something to clear up the bare unassisted Light of Nature?—If there had been no Revelation,—there would have been little Religion,—and indeed how could it have been expected;—For if we had had little Idea of a supreme Judge,—of future Rewards and

Punishments, — I am verily persuaded we should have had equally as little relish for Virtue and Obedience, — and consequently mere Savages upon the Face of the Earth; — But Thanks be to God, — that out of his boundless Goodness, he has thus liberally bestowed on Man the sacred Scriptures for Reproof, — for Correction, — and Instruction in Righteousness; — It is these that make us virtuous; — It is these that make us dutiful to God, — and kind and affectionate one towards another; — And hence such Benefits and Blessings must doubtless demand our highest Adoration of their great Author and Giver, — and at once shew their great Necessity, and that they really must have proceeded from something above Mortality, and consequently of divine Composition. — And further, — there is another very material Point, which still more closely urges the Necessity of a divine and particular Revelation in order that we may more clearly discover the Truths of Religion. — Look into the World, and lo! how depraved are Men? —

And if they are now so viciated and wicked, how would they have then been under the bare Light of Nature only?—How many have we that even now frame very unworthy Notions of a Deity?—How few take Care to please him, or are anxious to do his Will?—And how few ever retire into their own Breasts, and there calmly and seriously examine their Consciences, and consider the infinite Importance of serving God and obeying his Commands;—Nay how very few ever think on the Rewards and Punishments of a future State, due to Virtue and Vice?—And as this is the Case in this enlightened State of Man;—Pray what would we have been under the Direction of dark Reason only?—True, the Wits, —the choice Philosophers, and Moralists in the Heathen World, discovered many useful Things by the Aid of their Reason alone, and proved even to a Demonstration that there was a Being still superior to themselves, that had created them, and consequently demanded their utmost Adoration.—

May, they went so far as to shew the Necessity of being good and virtuous, and hence of paying a due Respect to some hidden, unknown, Almighty Power;—But yet notwithstanding all this they were still in many Points very deficient, —wandered, as it were, in the Dark, and could affirm nothing with positive Certainty;—For there were many important Truths, that they were still either totally ignorant of, or could but guess at them very faintly;—And, therefore, they stood in great Need of a Guide to conduct them;—True, they readily acknowledged a Deity, who made and governed the World by the Word of his Power,—yet they could not ascertain to themselves his very Nature and Attributes,—why he had created Man,—and the Cause of their corrupt State;—They understood also that this Deity was to be worshipped,—yet they could not tell in what Manner to pay their Homage, so as to be best pleasing to him, and most acceptable to his Will;—Hence the very wisest Philosophers among them, run int-

mad Extremes of Idolatry,—Superstition, and external Devotion;—And in other Things of the greatest Importance, their Reason often left them in Doubt,—such as concerning the Immortality of the Soul,—and the equal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in a future State.—As to the Writings of Plato, Cicero, Socrates, if you examine them, you will find they are full of Scruples and Perplexities concerning these Subjects, and particularly whether they should live after Death or no.—Thus then have I shown you that bare natural Reason only was insufficient to bring Life and Immortality to Light.—I shall, therefore, proceed to show that, for this Purpose, we have had the holy Scriptures given by Inspiration of God, and that they are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and Instruction in Righteousness.—Since then it is clear, beyond the least Shadow of Doubt, that there is the greatest Necessity of a divine Revelation;—I shall,

therefore, endeavour to prove, that a Revelation was given us, and that it is contained in the Old and New Testaments,—Peruse these sacred Pages, and you will find such sufficient Evidences,—such certain Signs,—and such plain Matters of Fact, as will positively and directly prove to, and convince every reasonable Mind of this grand Truth,—that all Scripture is given us by Inspiration of God.—For what Miracles, what dying Martyrs are here, nay, what Doctrines, and Instructions fell from the Lips of the Prophets?—Even the Gospel itself, which none but Heathens dare dispute, often quotes and appeals to the Testimony of the Law and the Prophets, and owns their divine Authority.—That there never were any Miracles wrought, is vainly disputed by the modern Deniers of all revealed Religion,—for if they own a God, the Possibility, nay the Reality of Miracles is immediately proved,—Is not the Power of God infinite? Is not his Knowledge boundless? and his Will absolute?—Then he can certainly effect ev

Thing, that does not clearly imply a Contradiction in itself, for this is the only Boundary he cannot pass,—but that there have been many miraculous Deeds wrought in, and by the Person of Christ, is avowed by the Acknowledgment of his bitterest Adversaries.—The Jews themselves confess, nay the most zealous Sect, and most violent Persecutors of the Christian Faith confess the Matter of Fact, only offering this feeble Remark, that he performed the Wonders he did through Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils,—which our Saviour evidently confutes, by observing, how impossible it is for a House that is divided against itself to continue or stand;—and hence, the Miracles which Jesus did, confirm the Authority of his Doctrine and divine Mission;—not to mention his healing the Sick,—giving Sight to the Blind,—stilling the Winds at a Word,—and feeding Thousands with a Morsel;—also the Wonders that attended his Crucifixion,—his Resurrection from the Dead,—Appearance afterwards to his Disciples,—and his

Ascension visibly into Heaven.—These were Truths that none could either contradict or oppose, and which undeniably affirmed, that he had been immediately sent from God to reveal his Will, and establish a System for ever, that was profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and for Instruction in Righteousness;—and would it not be absurd to the last Degree to imagine otherwise? to conceive that ever a God of infinite Purity would set his Seal to a Lye,—confirm an idolatrous Worship,—or grant Authority to the Instruments of Darknefs and Messengers of Satan?—But in a Word, that which clinches every Breach, and closes every opening for Misbelief concerning the divine Mission of our Saviour, and consequently the Divinity of the holy Scriptures is the exact Accomplishment of all those Prophecies concerning the Messiah;—for it was predicted that he should come before the Dissolution of the Jewish Government;—It was foretold of his Tribe and Family,—the Manner,—Nature, and Place of his Birth,—his Banishment,—wh

was to betray him,—for what he should be sold,—and how he should be treated as an Offender,—and many other Things, which, as they were particularly recited and described, were as punctually completed in our Saviour Jesus Christ.—Thus, then, we may venture to conclude, that our Saviour appeared with a divine Commission, and that the Scriptures were undoubtedly given by the immediate Word and Inspiration of God.—It remains, then, in a Word, to observe, that being thus by Inspiration, the Scripture must “ be profitable for Doctrine,—for Reproof,—for Correction,—and for Instruction in Righteousness.”—This is a Character every Way due to a divine Revelation, and exactly corresponds with that of the Christian.—Thus the Doctrine of Christ teaches us, what we are to believe concerning the one true and omniscient God,—shews us his Nature,—and tells us how he ought to be worshipped most pleasing to himself;—Nor does he propose any Thing to our Belief, but what is perfectly correspondent with our Reason to believe, and has an

immediate Influence upon our Lives and Actions;—for the moral Truths the Gospel inculcates are a direct Conviction of Error,—have a Tendency to the Reformation of Vice,—and point out the very best Instructions in the Way of Righteousness. —The End, or principal Design of all Morality and the Christian Duties, is the Promotion of true Goodness,—the Increase of Love and Charity,—Mercy and Peace,—and all the Virtues of a heavenly Conversation;—to prove this, be only at the Pains to read our Saviour's admirable Sermon on the Mount,—and there you will find, in three short Chapters, the best System of true Piety and Godliness, that ever dropt from a Pen;—I will venture to affirm, much preferable to any of the Writings of the most learned and celebrated Philosophers, and Moralists that ever wrote.—Since, then, we are thus certain of the divine Authority,—the Excellency,—and Profitableness of the Christian Revelation.—Let us finally petition our Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be thus

written for our Learning, that we may in such wise, hear,—
read,—mark,—learn,—and inwardly digest them, so that
we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting
Life, which he has so freely, liberally given us in our Lord and
Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed, &c. &c. Amen.

X
(No. 45.)

Psalm 119, Verse 59th.

" I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy
Testimonies."

In this Psalm the royal Prophet lays before us every Commendation due to the Law of Moses,—and at the same Time shews us the Excellency of it, and by his own Example tells us how necessary it was to live up to its Dictates:—For we may observe that in his Conduct he never loses sight of it;—But is constantly for the Benefit of others extolling it by various and exalted Speeches, calling it the Law of God,—his Testimonies,—Ways,—Precepts,—and express Commands,—his righteous Judgments,—his Word,—and in short his everlasting Ordinance.—Thus the royal Psalmist expresses himself, and thus he believes and does.—He made this Law his Delight and Study, and his Meditation Day and Night; for if at any Time through Folly or Forgetfulness, he

deviated the least from its Dictates, he soon recollected himself, —carefully searched out the Mistake, and presently redressed what he had done amiss,—and being thus reduced to a Sense of his Obligations, and a right Use of his Reason, he begins afresh and with double Vigour to exercise his Duty towards God;—" I thought on my Ways," says he, " and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies."—I will venture then to affirm from hence, that his Practice is a very fit Pattern for us to imitate and copy,—particularly, as it is evident from the shortest Reflection, that it is the most effectual Method to dispose our Hearts to prosecute and fulfil the Ordinances of the Lord,—and at the same Time to teach us to abandon Iniquity and Possessors of every evil Action, that Flesh is Heir to.—Is it not, therefore, a Duty incumbent on Man, carefully to weigh the Consequence before he acts or does?—Let us only wisely consider and duly reflect, and I am persuaded we will never do wrong,—no more than we would rather wish to make

a bad Bargain, than a good one; which is an Argument immediately repugnant to common Sense,—Self preservation,—and human Reason:—For Consideration and Reflection call to our Minds immediately the past Errors of our Lives,—arrest the Progress of extravagant and wandering Ideas, and prevent the Execution of cunning Devices and dishonest Temptations;—And when the wicked one attempts to betray us,—these prove an impenetrable Shield and ward off all his most alluring Attacks, though pointed even at our weakest and most delusive Frailties.—It appears then, that to consider our Ways is of the utmost Importance, and particularly as it so very much concerns the grand Affair of Religion and Piety:—And from hence I would think, it could not be the very hardest Task to persuade Men to such a Practice;—A Practice both pleasing and beneficial.—As to the Concerns of this World, they are sufficiently pursued and doated on, and engross as much,—nay more of our Time than we can justly afford.—

True, the Pleasures and good Things of this World are in themselves harmless, and if not abused, real Blessings;—But how seldom is this the Case?—How often do we hoard up our Treasures for no other Use than to gaze at and privately admire?—And at a Time too when perhaps many around us are miserably poor.—But Men of this Stamp, by very much, overrate the Value of Riches, and hence find little Room for the Care of an infinite and eternal State.—Indeed, for this Purpose, a Fondness for this World is far too general, as well by the tolerably Generous, as the miserably Covetous;—For it is seldom that the Expectation and Belief of Immortality properly and seriously affect us; I mean, in such Degree, as so mighty a Consequence and Importance requires;—Naturally indeed the ultimate Aim of our Wishes center in Glory and the Joys of Futurity, and yet by a fatal Stupidity, how often do we foolishly neglect what natural Reason dictates!—And how many indeed risk, or leave the Joys of

Futurity for ever unobtained?—Since then the dearest Interest of Man, is the eternal Happiness of the Soul, it reasonably follows that a prudent Care to complete this Business is our principal Duty;—A Business so weighty cannot be too much attended to,—and the more we attend,—the more will we still admire,—and wish to practise it;—evidently so, because it yields the most solid Satisfaction here, and is finally productive of eternal,—uninterrupted,—immortal Joys.—If we wish to preserve a Soul, that must one Day begin an Eternity of Joy or Misery,—we shall be naturally led through this Channel to contemplate all the Parts and Duties of a religious Life,—and I will venture to affirm, that Mortals never experience half the Pleasure they do from a Reflection on a serious and well spent Life,—a Life which can never exist without a lively Faith in God,—on which is founded all good Works; for the one is just as absolutely necessary as the other:—Because without good Wor'

the very strongest Faith is in vain and to no Purpose;—Since
“God accepteth none in any Nation, but those who fear him,
and work Righteousness.”—So it is likewise on the other
Hand,—without a firm Faith in God’s all-ruling Providence,
our best Services will be only fruitless Pretences, and avail
Nothing towards the Attainment of everlasting Salvation;
for the Apostle assures us, “That there is not Salvation
in any other, but the Lord Jesus Christ, and that there
is no other Name under Heaven given to Man, whereby
he shall be saved;”—Hence not only natural Reason,
but divine Authority affirms, that both Faith and good
Works are absolutely necessary to Salvation.—It behoves
us, therefore, seriously to consider the extensive Bounds
of God’s Power and Authority, and carefully engage the
Heart to a submissive Obedience to his Will,—and when we
thus conduct ourselves,—when we have fairly scrutinized the
and Motions of the Soul,—and impartially canvassed the

outward Actions, we may then justly be called considerate,—discreet,—and prudent Men;—and doubtless when “we thus consider our Ways, we shall, without Scruple, turn with David unto the Testimonies of the Lord.”—And indeed how necessary is such a Consideration?—Seeing how the Neglect of it endangers an irretrievable overthrow of our Souls,—never again to be surmounted.—However careful we be, we must observe that we are never entirely secure from the Attacks and Wiles of Satan;—for he lays his Nets so artfully, that it is next to an Impossibility, always to escape his Snare;—because human Nature is naturally prone to lucid Intervals, and thoughtless Vacancies;—consequently it is no Wonder that the very best of Men sometimes fall;—the Ground we stand on is so slippery, that our Case, even at best, is very hazardous and uncertain;—How circumspect, therefore, ought we to be, to prevent the many violent Assaults we are daily exposed to, intended to draw us into Sin, and pervert our righteous Intentions?—

And that we are exposed to these daily dangerous Occurrences, we all know, and are well aware of;—What then are we to expect if we fall with our Eyes thus open?—Are we justifiable in such a Conduct?—By no Means,—if we thus give the Adversary advantage over us, we can have Nothing to look for, but certain Destruction and inevitable Ruin,—this is exactly the Case with the inconsiderate Sinner,—he knows his Duty, but through a thoughtless Indolency, lingers till his Enemy overtakes him, and then, when he wishes to fly, he cannot,—the Trap is too curiously contrived to admit of an Escape,—and thus for the Indulgence of an Hour, he is, without Mercy, thrown headlong into an Eternity of Misery and Woe;—This, this is the Fruit of a Life spent without a careful, and a due Self-examination.—Let us then, my beloved, let us allow ourselves Leisure to consider our Ways, and God; who delights in being a Friend to his Creatures, “Will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will, with the Temptation,

make us a Way to escape;”—for it is well known, that he, who is for us, is much more powerful than he, who is against us;—under which Assurance, we have the greatest Encouragement to endeavour to be what we ought to be.—If we put on the Helmet of Obedience, we shall be able to defeat the most alluring Insinuations to deceive,—this leads to Repentance, and a becoming Amendment of Life, and makes the Remembrance of Wickedness offensive and disgusting, and we wisely hate and despise that, which before was our darling Delight and Pastime; and if a Self-examination be thus necessary, how inexcusable are we in neglecting it?—In feebly neglecting that, which leads to a sincere Repentance;—a Repentance, that leads to Grace,—Grace to Salvation,—and Salvation to everlasting Happiness,—the End, Aim, and Perfection of frail human Nature,—hence the oftner we make ourselves the Subject of our Meditations, the nearer we still approach to Conversion, and a happy Eternity,—and thus the Psalmist thought on his Ways,

ruminated on his Misdeeds, and in due Time turned his Feet to the Testimonies of the Lord,—By Reflection he soon found out his Errors, started, as it were, at his perilous Situation, and immediately made all the haste he could to re-enter into the Path of Righteousness;—the same Behaviour is observable in the Traytor Judas, who, after he had reflected on the horrid Crime of betraying his Lord and Master Christ, into the Hands of cruel Murderers, could never be at ease;—and therefore, to put an End to his Compunction and Trouble, he returned the Price of innocent Blood, and by hanging himself, terminated his Shame and Existence.—Would Time permit, I might still produce if possible a more striking Instance of this in the Prodigal Son,—but as the Story is well known, I shall beg Leave to defer it here, and proceed to conclude with a short Exhortation.—As it behoves us, then, my beloved, let us look back upon ourselves, and earnestly repent us of our Sins,—if God thinks fit to chastise us, let us by all Means be chastised,—If he favours our Projects, let

us bear it with Prudence, and if he wishes to teach us, let us never refuse his Instruction.—let us never lose Sight of the Mark of our high calling, the one Thing needful;—and let us finally, with holy David, always pay a strict Attention to our Ways,—wisely consider their Consequence,—scrutinize their Termination,—and thus, ere it is too late, we shall doubtless follow the Dictates of the great God of Heaven, “the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

X.

(No. 46.) 8th Chapter St. John, Verse 51st.

*"Verily, verily I say unto you, if a Man keep my Saying,
he shall never see Death."*

Had the Jews ever possessed the least Veracity,—had they not been stubborn and perverse to a Degree,—many of the undeniable Proofs of our Saviour's Mission might have been dispensed with.—I say undeniable, and for the Propriety of the Expression, I appeal to every rational Mind to determine; for what Being could from a Touch, or a Word, give Eyes to the Blind,—Ears to the Deaf,—Health to the Sick,—and, above all, Life to the Dead, unless he was invested with a divine Power?—How either ignorant there must many of the Jews have been?—How stubborn in their Natures?—Or, to speak favourably, how blind to their own Interests?—For our Saviour here in the Text well assures them, that if they only kept his Saying, they should never taste of Death;—A

very plain Lesson to him, who is willing to believe, and as comfortable as plain.—Had his sayings been hard to accomplish,—hard to conform to, there might have been some slight Excuse for the Stubbornness of Men;—But his severest Commands, were rather pleasing than disagreeable, rather easy than troublesome,—he only wished us to be righteous, to do justice to Mankind, and to walk humbly with God, which I think no wise Man will deem an Imposition upon the Liberties of Men, and I am certain, such Commands, no good Man will refuse to follow.—Let us be righteous then, and strictly observe the Words of our Saviour;—We, none of us here, I dare say, pretend to dispute his Authority;—And why, therefore, refuse to copy his Precepts?—It certainly can proceed from no other Motive, but in Order to give a loose to unbridled Follies, and the wicked Propensities of Sense: but this is a wretched Trifling with the Concern of the Soul, and its Salvation,—Salvation must be compassed by a different

Scheme,—not by Sloth and Idleness, but by a steady Perseverance in the Word of Truth,—the just Doctrine of our Blessed Lord;—It is strange to observe the Remissness of Man in his Duty,—particularly so when we consider the Endowments he possesses;—Is there any one so much a Seducer, but he believes there are Spirits, or any one so much an Infidel, as not to believe a future State? Or can any Man be so wicked and ignorant, as not to know that this State is eternal, whether it be bad or good?—If not,—if there are none so stupidly blind to their own Interests, or giddily maddened with Folly?—must it not be strange indeed, we ever have it in our Power to call them Triflers, or accuse them of Negligence;—But I am truly sorry to observe this is too often the Case;—Yes, we too often, and in the most glaring Manner, level ourselves below the Line of the brute Creation.—All other Creatures act according to their Natures;—The Inanimate are regular and orderly in all their Motions,

and the *Animals* are obedient to their natural *Instincts*;—
But *Man*,—perverse *Man*, who enjoys the sole *Privilege* of
Reason, and who is created the sole self-governing *Creator*,
is the only *Rebel* to his *Maker* and *Enemy* to himself;—
A *Rebel* to his *Maker*, because he wilfully breaks his *Laws*;
and an *Enemy* to himself, because his *Disobedience* to these
Laws, will one *Day* fall upon himself, to the inevitable *Des-*
truction of his own *Happiness*;—How many are there that
not only *dare*, but do live from *Year* to *Year* in the constant
Practice and *Habit* of well known *Sins*,—such as common
Swearing, *Drunkenness*, *Injustice*, *Malice*, *Revenge*, and
Debauchery?—And who seldom hath an *Opportunity* or resist a
Temptation.—Nay how many are there, who not only neglect,
but even *dare* to live in a *Contempt* of the *Duties* of *Religion*,
and will not scruple, even to despise all its *Professors*? and
to accuse such, is only to make them, if possible, more *rich*;
—For the more you advise and exhort,—the more they

blaspheme and swear.—These are such, as wish to reconcile God, if possible, to their own Inclinations, and because it is said, that he will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss, —they call this their Licence, and forget that though God is merciful, yet he is just, and of purer Eyes than to behold Vice unpunished.—Good God! What Conclusion must we draw from the Lives of such Men? What a Picture does Reflection draw before us? Here we see the Gulph of Misery extending its Jaws, for their Reception, and breathing Destruction upon every one that approaches it.—Solomon tells us, in his Proverbs, that “It is joy to the Just to do Judgment; but Destruction shall be to the Workers of Iniquity,—and that the Man that wandereth out of the Way of Understanding shall remain in the Congregation of the Dead.”—But what does the Text inform us? That, “if we keep the Sayings of our Saviour we shall never taste of Death.”—Let the Gospel, therefore, be our chief Guide,—and when we repair to the

House of God, which we should not fail regularly to do, let it be to adore its Head, the Maker and Ruler of all.—The Church was never meant for Amusement, nor are we to come there to make our superficial and foolish Remarks,—we are to reflect on our Commis^{ions}sions, ^{as we} and seriously think on our Omissions, ^{of good} and where we find a Breach of Conduct, we must here endeavour carefully to repair it.—If we are lusty and strong,—healthy and active, and in the Bloom of Youth, yet this is no Encouragement for Negligence in that great Duty which Concerns our eternal Interests,—A Flash of Lightening will take Life, or an unexpected Fall from a Horse,—Nay, the Will of God, in a Moment, will bring the stoutest Man to the Ground.—Since then Life is so precarious, and Death uncertain, how ought we to prepare ourselves for a Time that will come, and we know not how soon?—Perhaps To-morrow,—To-day,—this Hour,—nay this very Moment.—And how alarming must it be to the Feelings of a good Man, to see a sudden Arrest dash

upon that Being, who has spent his Life in a Contempt of his Duty, and who is now even in the Height of the Day,—wasting his Time in the Height of Jollity, and in the Madness of Folly and Dissipation,—certainly it must be Folly in the true Sense of the Word, to see a Man, in spite of Nature, destroy his Constitution, perhaps forty Years before she has, by due Course, wrought out her Period,—and can a Man, in such a Situation, with any Degree of Confidence, turn to God, or hope for Salvation? Can I expect the Reward of Religion, without being Righteous? Can, I at Pleasure, break all the Commands of God, and still inherit his Promises? Or, while in Health, have I Liberty granted me to breath out Nothing but affronting Oaths, and daring Execrations, provided I form my last Breath into a Prayer? He, who thinks thus, I am persuaded, will find himself very grievously mistaken,—but where a Man is in a Moment deprived of all Sense and Reason, and in that Moment too, when he promised to

himself a Renovation of Life and Manners,—how wretched and pitiable must his Case be? And yet have we any just Right to accuse God of harsh and mercilefs Dealings;—No, it was himself that was to blame, it was himself that brought this heavy Curse upon him.—God deals fairly with all Mankind, and, therefore, will strictly reward every Man according to his Works.—Let us not then put off the Day of Repentance, till perhaps we have it not in our Power to repent;—let us not rest happy under the Thought of doing Something at the last, when extended on a Death-bed, or groaning under a Load of Disease, chance we may become delirious, and hence lose that Liberty of Reflection,—that Opportunity of Amendment, we had so long proposed to ourselves.—If we are so presumptuous as to make such Proposals to ourselves, and rest satisfied under such Ideas, it is but just with God, that such presumptuous Expectations should be punished in the Defeat of them.—and such during

Wretches rendered incapable of any such Means of Repentance;—but suppose a Man has some Time, some Weeks allowed him for Penitence, yet how are we to judge of the Sincerity of his Resolutions and Vows? Sincere Repentance can only be proved by Works;—by those we must testify our Amendment of Life,—and a Man upon his Death-bed is totally deprived of this Privilege;—he may pray and vow, but he cannot act;—nor have we any Reason to conclude from the few Examples we have seen, that, should he be restored to his former Health, he would stand steadfast to his late Resolutions;—does it not seem contradictory to our natural Reason, to imagine that a Man can, in a Moment, as it were, turn from and despise that Sin, which has so long been his darling Pleasure?—I would not wonder, to hear a Miser upon his Death-bed, when little Hopes of Recovery were left, when Death in all its Horror was evident to his Eyes,—I would not wonder to hear him seem to despise all his once Deified Treasure;—nor would I wonder

to see the same Miser, on Recovery, return to his wonted Course, and wish as ardently To-day for Mountains of Gold, as he had Yesterday seemed to despise and hate them.—Hence it follows, that such a Repentance, even could it be beneficial, is at best too hazardous to be relied upon.—Let us not then put off till To-morrow, what may be done To-day with safety;—the Commands of God are very easy, and how very pleasing in the Practice of them, for they bear examining and Reflection well, for the more we reflect upon the Sayings of our Saviour, the more we admire and adore them.—A Man, says he, “that keeps my Sayings, shall never taste of Death;”—who then, that has his own Interest at Heart, would foolishly put off the great Work of Salvation, till a Time when perhaps he cannot Work? Now is the accepted Time,—now is the Time to be employed to advantage,—now when Health abounds,—our Reason is sound, and Ideas clear;—now we may conduct ourselves evenly and orderly, and enjoy many Advantages, that are wholly

denied a dying Mortal,—and particularly to him whose Conscience is awakened by Disease, and alarmed by the sudden Approach of Death,—To-day, then, if you would hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts,—let your Conversation be just and holy, pleasing to the Lord;—and let your Actions fairly correspond with your Conversation;—fly Dissimulation, and justly abhor every Appearance of Deceit. —Thus you shall prove yourselves true Followers of the Sayings, the Commands,—the unparalleled Doctrine of our Saviour,—and thus you may rest well assured that you shall live, and never taste of Death.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

X
(No. 47.) 13th Chapter St. Matthew, Verse 22d.

"He that received Seed among the Thorns, is he that heareth the Word, and the Care of this World, and the Decoitfulness of Riches choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful."

From the Text we may observe, that in all human Perfections to resist a darling and favourite Foible is certainly one of the best and greatest;—Riches, therefore, being one of the most darling Pursuits of Man;—and as they are universally allowed deceitful, it behoves us to be careful how we covet them.—In a certain Degree, they are absolutely necessary;—But there should be bounds to our Desires;—For though Riches may Licence us to visit all public Amusements,—entitle us to dress,—and flourish in a Circle of gay Companions;—Yet to these a Christian ought to know he should not sacrifice all other Views and Considerations.—If they are not properly used and confined within due Limits, they may be productive of much more Misery, than all the Images of

Honour, or the empty Scenes of Mirth and worldly Pleasure can balance.—To be totally wrapped up in these, is to fall down and worship them, and a gross renouncing the Laws and Commands of God;—It is a wilful forfeiting the Happiness of Heaven, and abandoning our Souls to Destruction.—In treating upon this Subject then, it will be best to apply it to ourselves, by considering what a Folly it would be to risque the Loss of eternal Happiness, for the fleeting Pleasures of a transient World.—The good Things of this World, erroneously so called, may indeed load us with many temporary Pleasures and Enjoyments;—But cannot possibly be sufficient to satisfy the Cravings of an immortal Spirit.—The intelligent Part of Man looks far beyond any Thing earthly, aims at Things real, and not subject to decay;—For what real Satisfaction can we derive from a perpetual Succession of Events?—what Happiness from a continual Change of Circumstances?—rich to Day,—To-morrow poor,—and such

is the natural Revolution of the World;—If we gain ever so much of its Favours, repeated Examples inform us, we may not long enjoy them,—and to gain even a small Part of its Favours honestly, as we ought, requires great Pains and Industry.—But the Pride of Man is become so Predominant, that too often, to make what is called a Figure in the World, many launch into dishonest Extremes;—What they aim at, they will have at any Hazard;—For Covetousness, Pride and Ambition, are never satisfied,—never say it is enough,—but what is the End;—False Honor ends in the Field,—Prodigality in a Prison,—and Fraud at the Gallows.—Let it then be our Business, to endeavour to escape such alarming Situations, by adhering properly to the Word of God; Let us receive it,—and understand it so, that the Seed of it may bring forth Fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred Fold.—But this is more devoutly to be wished, than expected, if we may be allowed to judge from the De-

pravity of the World;—God forbid that there should be no good Men amongst us, but I am led to say, "Depravity of the World;"—Because, on Investigation, we find but few Men of real Probity, there are too many, that will readily deceive you if they can, and still sooner, if they can do it under a Cloak of Friendship;—And of all Enemies,—I look upon these as the most dangerous.—Let a Man then, who would try the Reality of his Goodness, and know the Sincerity of his Heart,—let him frequently examine his Actions; and if they will not bear the Test of a close Scrutiny,—let him immediately improve and amend them till they will.—What signifies aiming totally at exalted Stations,—they are difficult in the Attainment, and troublesome in the Possession.—Competitors and Enemies interpose,—Disappointments ensue,—and, in the mean Time, Life slips away, and Death approaches:—Death, that sure and unrelenting Archer, that sweeps off Millions without reserve,—deprives Kings of their

*Honors,—and tears the Miser from his Deified Treasure.
—The Princes and Conquerors of old subdued Nations,—
went about devouring,—destroying, and depriving Multitudes
of Life and Property;—Yet Death did not forget to destroy
them in Return, and avenge an injured World.—Would
we only sow the good Seed in our Hearts, that our Steps might
be the Footsteps of Righteousness, and our Actions the Product
of Virtue,—then the World might well and justly observe,
that we had, and still should have more Abundance.—Nature
intended that we should all have sufficient of this World's
Riches, and that there should not be any excessive Difference
between Man and Man, further than the Rewards of honest
Industry;—But what now makes the very wide Chasm,
are the Vices and Follies of the Age, or what is politely
called a modern or fashionable World;—These make the
Changes of Life, and cause a perpetual Depravation of Morals.
—These are the bad Seeds that destroy and corrupt the Heart,*

and make Mankind often launch into such unwarrantable Evils, as bring them to a disgraceful untimely Period;—But to speak favourably, the bold Wickednesses of Transgressors produce at best Losses and Disappointments,—Broils and Contentions,—Suits and Trials,—Tumults and Wars.—Let us take a View of that Person, or rather a few Persons, who are born to and possess ample Fortunes,—and do not we see that two out of three are spoiled and miserably deceived by these Riches;—Because they have sufficient to purchase with, they seldom bethink an Inclination, and this must work its good or bad Effects according to the Merit of the Action;—Midnight Revellings are often the favourite Career of Riches.—And these, we all know, from unbounded Examples, are the certain Product of Misery and Want:—Such Men are at Intervals, perhaps one Sunday in a Month, tolerably Pious.—Particularly so, if we may judge from what we see of them at Church.—Here they are Something awakened, and their Souls

perhaps not a little alarmed;—but such are only those, who receive Seed among Thorns;—they hear the Word, and with Attention too;—but the Cares of the World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, soon interfere, and choke the Word, and they become totally unfruitful.—Would Men, then, who revel in the Madness of Midnight Folly, would they at this Period be still and calm,—would they reflect,—would they throw aside for a Moment the Sons of Belial, and list, at Midnight, how all Nature is hushed asleep,—not a Breath to be heard, but the gentle rustling of Leaves, as the Air steals through the Thicket.—All lost in Sleep,—Would they then, at this Moment, think on that Time, that much more prodigious and amazing Period, which, ere long, will alarm their sleeping Bones, and lull them in eternal Rest,—but farther, when the Trump of God shall sound an universal Call to the grand and still more tremendous Tribunal,—when the Tenants of the Tomb shall rise to answer their Maker's Inquisitions,—will this not wound the Ear of

the Ungodly, and affright, even to Distraction, the impenitent Sinner?—The stupendous Peal will shake the very Foundations of Nature, and pierce the deepest Recesses of the Grave.—Let us then in Time, my beloved, let us listen to the still Voice of the Gospel;—let us now attend to the divine, the gracious Invitations of our Saviour, and thus qualify ourselves for the last decisive Sentence, which will thus be as Tidings of Liberty to the Dungeon Captive, as the Year of Jubilee to the harrassed Slave.—This, this shall be its charming Import, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the Dust;"—for ye have made good the accepted Time, the Day of Salvation, and seized Opportunity in due Season.—O well it is with you,—happy are ye, and happy shall ye be.—This is what the Virtuous may expect, when the Shadows of that long Evening, that follow the Footsteps of Death, are stretched over us.—Thus may he expect to enter into the Joy of his Lord.—And is it so, my Soul, says the Christian, who then would not be Virtuous?

—Ay, is there not Something within me, that whispers,
“He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy,
let him be filthy still.”—How does it behove Mankind,
therefore, to rouse themselves from Sleep, lulled in a vain
Security, and dreaming in a supine Inadvertency?—for now
only is the Time allotted to make the great Reward of Salvation
sure,—now the proper Seed Time to make Eternity a joyful
Harvest,—for how many of our Friends and Neighbours, are
daily launched into Eternity,—and it should not be forgot, that
we ourselves will shortly follow,—leave the Society of Men, how-
ever agreeable, and be numbered with the Dead;—a
Moment's Delay, then, may be an irreparable Loss, and
irretrievable Pain,—beyond the Power of Relief, and beyond
all Possibility of receiving the least spiritual Good;—how
many of our fellow Creatures, are at this very Moment,
languishing on a Bed of Sickness,—groaning under a Load of
Disease,—counting the tedious Hours,—telling every striking

Clock,—and anxiously wishing for some little Truce, from their sad Agonies, in peaceful Slumber?—When we seriously reflect on these, is it possible that we can any longer give Way to Sin?—Can we any longer hear the Word of God without Effect?—Can we receive the Seeds of it only to be choked with the Thorns of Ungodliness?—On Reflection, it is impossible,—What signify all the Cares and Riches of this World, if we neglect the one Thing needful?—What signifies a Temporary,—nay, as it were, a Moment's Pleasure, for the Loss of infinite Happiness?—A wise Man,—nay, it is not in the Nature of any Mortal, if he reflects on the wide Difference, to brook the Exchange.—It seems, therefore, that for Want of Thought, many a Soul is for ever undone,—Why then do we still madly refuse to think?—our eternal Interests call loudly for it.—Hence, let a Man, as it greatly behoves him, learn to look, before he leaps,—learn to consider, before he acts;—for on this Thread hangs his eternal Weal or Misery.—It is

an easy, very easy Matter to say to the Soul, before we do,
“Is it right?”—And by this Caution we shall learn never
to do wrong;—for certainly it would be Madness in the height,
to run into a Pit, where Nothing but a Miracle could save us,
—Nothing less protect us from Destruction.—In a Word,
then, the Scriptures are the good Seeds, with which we should
bestrew the Heart;—and we should take particular Care not
to let the Deceitfulness of this World interfere;—for this is one of
the most formidable Enemies the Soul has to encounter;—Let
the Scriptures then be our chief Guide,—here the Way of Salvation
is plainly marked out;—Nay, there is for us no other Saviour,
—no other holy Spirit,—no other Father of all,—neither any
other Gospel.—As to the Riches of this World, nay all the
Kingdoms of it, and the Glory of them, should we possess
them, would be a poor Ransom upon a Death-bed, for a
neglected, ruined, and miserably lost Soul;—let us not, then,
for the Sake of these, endanger our eternal Welfare.—There are

two Events, that infinitely concern us, (viz.) Death and Judgment:—The first will one Day convince us, what it is to neglect the Word of God,—the one Thing needful,—and the latter will exhibit to us a still more formidable Scene, when that dreadful Sentence shall be passed upon the Neglectors of the Word of God, "Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels;"—The Awfulness of which is easier to imagine than express.—Let not then, the Deceitfulness of Riches, choke the Word in its growth,—the Voice of our Saviour calls aloud to forbid it,—to exhort us to meditate rather on Time and Eternity,—to employ the former wisely, and to fear the latter religiously;—and finally to turn to him, that says to the Soul, "I am thy Salvation;"—Which, that we may all do, God grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, &c. Amen.

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(No. 48.) 5th Chapter John, Verse 39th.

" Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal
: Life, and these are they which testify of me."

The Reason of this Desire was owing to the ill Disposition of the Jews towards Christ;—They were continually cavelling at him, and always watching to find out a Cause of Accusation against him; and here they thought they had completely gained their wicked Purposes; for behold on the Sabbath Day our Saviour met with a poor Man, who had laboured under an Infirmary full thirty and eight Years, and he had Compassion on him, and healed him;—And this he did out of that pure Love and Friendship he bore to Mankind peculiar to himself.—He wished not only to do a Service to the poor Man, but also to examine the Hearts of those around; and he perfectly succeeded in his Designs;—For though the Cure was so visible, as not to admit of the least Contradiction, yet,

because it was done on the Sabbath Day, they accused him of Sabbath Breaking, and, therefore, were so irritated, and full of Resentment, that they sought still the more to destroy him. — Wicked, — merciless Wretches! — Are these Dispositions fit for a human Breast? — Was Man ever formed, so distinguished in his Nature, — so capable of knowing Right and Wrong, — and so susceptible of Feeling, thus to degrade his native Dignity? — By no Means, — he was formed for nobler Purposes, — to serve his God, and love his Fellow Creatures; — And hence to protect the Innocent, — assist the Needy, and wipe away the Tear of Distress. — This, this is the Duty of the Man, and dignifies the very Name of Christian, — and indeed Nothing else can shew, and prove us to be what we really ought to be in all Holy Conversation and Godliness. — But how widely different were the Dispositions of the Jews in our Saviour's Days; — Full of Pride, — they aimed at Nothing but Greatness in this World, — and full

of Envy; what was it they would not do, rather than lose any Power, or Distinction in the Eye of the World?—On this Account they stopped not to murder, in a most cruel and barbarous Manner, the best Man that ever lived, even their Blessed Lord and Saviour,—he that came on Purpose, and particularly to them,—to save that which was lost and gone astray,—to be a Propitiation for our Sins,—and to be an eternal Mediator between God and Man.—Here is a striking Picture indeed,—On one Hand, Pride,—Envy,—and Cruelty of the deepest Die;—And on the other, Virtue and Goodness in full Perfection;—For when he was reviled, he reviled not again,—when buffeted, he bore it with Composure;—And when he saw them busy seeking his Life, he gladly, with the fullest Conviction and plainest Reason, would have opened their Eyes, and shewn them their Error:—Thus, says he, " Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and these are they which testify of me."—Here he justly reprehends

them for their not knowing of whom he was, or rather for their Unbelief;—They acknowledged and received the Scriptures as sacred and just, and he here tells them, that these were the only incontestible Proofs that he was the very Christ that should come, and not another:—They almost in every Page, prophesy and describe the Messiah, and so clear, that Nothing but mere Obstinacy could pretend to thwart or dispute them; on which Account the Scriptures prove themselves of the greatest Use and Advantage to Man.—But some will even dare to dispute the Authority and Origin of the Scriptures.—But this is vainly disputed, when we consider the Authors of them;—They were mere Men, and laboured under many Disadvantages which we enjoy;—They had no particular natural Abilities,—nor were these improved by Education,—and yet they foretold the exact Time of our Saviour's Birth,—Death,—the Manner how,—when,—and where;—Which was all fulfilled and completed upon Calvary.—And could this be

done without divine Assistance?—'Tis impossible,—Hence the Scriptures justly argue that Christ was absolutely the Son of God,—and that they were the immediate Word of God, and not the Inventions and Policies of Men, contrived only to deceive.—It is clear that the Writers of them were plain and honest in their Relations,—and were by no Means calculated to lead Men into Mistakes and Delusions.—Far from this, they did not even attempt to hide from the World, their own Simplicity,—Illiterateness,—and mean Condition; but frankly declared every Circumstance relative to themselves and their Families.—Thus Moses stops not to report the Reproach of his own Tribe,—the Incest of his Parents,—his own Murmuring against God,—and Want of Faith after many wonderful and miraculous Confirmations.—Likewise St. Peter's denial of his Lord and Saviour is mentioned by all the Evangelists.—Neither is it kept a Secret how St. Paul persecuted the Church of Christ, and what happened at his

Conversion;—The Obscurity and Meanness of others is also taken notice of;—Thus Amos was a Herd, and a Gatherer of wild Figs.—Matthew was a Publican, or Gatherer of Toll,—Peter,—James,—and John were Fishermen; which honest and unreserved Descriptions of themselves ought to be a sufficient Evidence that they wrote by the Authority of God:—Nay the Scriptures themselves declare, " that Prophecies came not in old Time by the Will of Man; but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."—Since then the Scriptures are the Word of God without a Doubt;—Let us carefully read,—mark,—learn,—and so inwardly digest them, that we may both know and feel their Usefulness and Advantage;—And that they are useful and advantageous, I shall further endeavour to illustrate.—Let us then consider, that they are in themselves sufficient to bring us to all saving Knowledge, and that they contain all Doctrine necessary to Salvation, and consequently are an exact Rule both of Life

and Manners;—indeed, what greater Reflection could be cast upon the Wisdom of God, than to imagine he would determine otherwise?—Or can it enter into the Breast of Man ever to conceive, that he would send his Messengers to deliver his Word, and reveal his Will in Vain?—In the Text, we have the strongest Authority that the Jews themselves confessed and believed, that the Scriptures contained Doctrine sufficient for eternal Life;—and this our Saviour confirmed. —In his Gospel we are told, that he, by no Means, endeavours to impair or lessen their Esteem of them, but rather to strengthen it by confirming what they beheld, only as it were in a Glass; —and hence, to prove to them, that, “All Scripture was given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine,—for Reproof,—for Correction,—and Instruction in Righteousness.” —Thus excellent and advantageous are the Scriptures,—thus they perfectly teach us the Way of Salvation, and, without the Help of Councils, or the Decision of Consistories, are an

infallible Guide to lead us to true Happiness;—for they are perfectly plain and easy to be understood, even to the meanest and most obscure Understanding, provided they are willing to believe;—for as Solomon saith, “ All the holy Scriptures are plain and easy to him that will understand.”—Since then this is the Case, let us mark well their holy Instructions,—for herein is contained the most noble and excellent System of Laws, for the well Government and Regulation of our Lives;—and hence the Psalmist declares, “ That the Law of the Lord is perfect;”—and justly does he thus declare,—for here we are advised and commanded to do every Thing consistent with right Reason,—Virtue,—and Goodness,—towards God,—towards Man,—and ourselves.—Here we are directed how to examine and govern the Heart in order that our inward Actions may be well-pleasing and acceptable to God, as well as our open and outward Deeds;—And can we be better employed than in the Exercise of a good Conscience void of Offence?—It

is impossible.—Hence, let us, as it greatly behoves and concerns us, let us live godly, soberly, and honestly in the present World;—let us imitate the Perfections of the Deity, and let us Copy his moral Attributes as much as possible, for on this our future Happiness in a great Measure, may totally depend;—And since it is incontestibly proved that the true Messiah has appeared upon Earth, the Truth of the New Testament cannot be disputed, and this is an incontestible Proof of the Authenticity of the Old;—It follows, therefore, that this most valuable Part of the Scriptures, exhibits to us a Method of obtaining Reconciliation and Favour with God.—This shows us, that the World was over run with Wickedness, and that Nothing but a very particular Expiation could keep us from eternal Misery and Death.—This teaches us, that no less than the only begotten Son of God could be a sufficient Sacrifice for our Sins and Transgressions;—but it also further teaches us, that without a due Repentance and Faith in Christ, his

Blood and Death, will, by no Means, procure our Pardon and Forgiveness;—for the Scriptures inform us, “ That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life; ” —and thus they teach us to repent, that our Sins may be for ever blotted out.—Ought we not, therefore, to set the greatest Value and Esteem upon these incomparably excellent Writings? —Yes, we should be industrious in reading, and careful in meditating upon them, and thus studiously acquaint ourselves with their true Meaning and Interpretation;—and the sooner, the better, for it was a divine Consolation to Timothy, that he had been instructed in the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures, even from a Child;—and St. Paul particularly recommends the examining the Doctrine of the Apostles by the Writings of the old Testament,—that thus in this comparative View, we may the more clearly discover the Truth of both.—What then shall we think of those, (I mean the Roman Catholics) who

Lock up the Scriptures in an unknown Tongue, and thereby rob the People of the Key of true Knowledge, save the Priests alone?—Pray, how does such a Practice accord with Reason? It is by no Means justifiable.—Hence, let us, my beloved, let us, who have the free Use of them, employ them to serve the great Design they so fitly urge and promote,—the Salvation of our immortal Souls.—Let us, like holy David, meditate on the Law of God Day and Night.—Let this be our Delight,—our Study,—and Employment from the Morning till the Eve of our Days, so that at all Times, we may prove, that Wisdom is the grey Hair, and an unspotted Life is old Age.—Let us live as the Scriptures prescribe;—let these prevail with us above all other Considerations;—for unless we live religiously, becoming the Name we profess,—the best Knowledge,—the best Faith,—the most divine Instructions,—and the purest Church upon Earth will avail Nothing to our Salvation.—But as it is clear that we have Laws

sufficient to lead us to Heaven, I shall only deserve that happy
shall we be, if we believe and do them;—And which, that
we may never neglect, is my humble and sincere Prayer,
through Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the
Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

* (No. 49.) 1st Chapter Isaiah, Verse 3d.

"The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but Israel doth not know, my People do not consider."

If we examine the preceding Verse, we shall find that this Observation was owing to a rebellious and inconsiderate Spirit, that seems to have reigned predominant among the People.—Nay, we well know, that it was for Want of Consideration that the Jews so often brought themselves into the most calamitous Circumstances, and at last drew themselves into a most terrible and a Kind of final Destruction;—And the same Cause will doubtless have the same Effect on all who sin without a seasonable Repentance;—For God hath sworn "that no disobedient Sinner shall enter into his Rest;"—And has he sworn, what he will not perform?—Nay, his Word cannot fall to the Ground;—His Threatenings, like his Promises, are sure:—If a Man would consult his Reason, he need not go to the sacred Scriptures to learn this;—But

how few seem to consider, or rather what Multitudes never consider at all?—How seldom do careless Sinners think on the invisible God, or even mention his Name unless to profane it in horrid Blasphemies?—Which is a clear Indication, that they neither reflect upon their Actions, nor weigh, nor ponder their Steps;—They too seldom have the Caution even of common Travellers,—to say,—how came I into this Road?—Whither does it lead?—What Company have I in it?—Wise Men or Fools?—Honest or Dishonest?—Men of sober Conversation or not?—Too many are there that do not Reason thus with themselves;—They rest Content with falsely thinking that they really are what they should be,—and hence utterly undo themselves by such careless Indifference.—But would we only suffer our Consciences to speak out, our Deeds would be reprov'd,—and did we but consider the vast Importance of Salvation, we should not fail to be reclaimed;

It is plain we do not; else we could not neglect so great

Salvation.—To be saved, in the Scripture Sense of the Word, is to be delivered from the Wrath to come,—from eternal Death and Destruction:—And did Men ever consider what Wrath is,—what a dreadful Thing it is to fall into the Hands of the Living God?—What it is to be doomed to everlasting Punishment.—How wretched? How insupportable would their Condition be?—The very Thought of Eternity,—how terrible!—But how little do careless Sinners think how much is comprehended in this one Word ETERNITY.—Did they think of this, their worldly Pleasures would soon turn sour, and their Hearts faint within them.—Such Persons do not consider the Uncertainty of Life;—They manage it as if they were never to die, and throw their Time prodigally away, not considering, "that this very Night their Souls may be required of them."—But did we only see as we ought,—see how precarious our Abode in this World is,—see that this Day we are warm in Health, and in a few

Days more may be cold and mouldering in the Grave,—and that Death ends all our Opportunities and Seasons of preparing for Futurity,—doubtless this would teach us to resolve to lead new and godly Lives, and turn our Feet to the divine Testimonies;—And why do we refuse to consider this?—Can we lengthen Life by not thinking on Death?—Or is our Danger less by not attending to it?—By no Means,—Our appointed Time is in the Hands of another, and may be required of us at a Period, when we are least prepared for so awful a Change.—And did we think on this, with what Ease would we be able to baffle the strongest Temptations of Sin, and to mind heavenly Things.—All that the World could offer to induce us to violate a good Conscience, and to hazard the Loss of the divine Favour, we should reject with Scorn.—For Instance, are we tempted with the Prospect of a little Gain?—Let us consider how dear it may cost us;—and hence such a Temptation will soon be disarmed.

of all its Power;—But without such Considerations, Sin easily ensnares and deludes Men to their everlasting Ruin,—persuades them by Arguments of Deceit, and leads them Captive, by Bands, which might easily be broken, did they awaken their drowsy Powers.—Indeed, the considerate thinking Christian, may sometimes be deceived, and be shaken from the firm Basis on which he stands;—but then he soon recovers himself, triumphs over his own Passions, and easily resists the Temptations of the World.—Would we then be such Men? Then, let us consider the proper Character of reasonable Beings;—This Faculty is the main Distinction of the Man, from the Beast, and the exercise of it, of the wise Man from the Fool.—“Remember this,” saith Isaiah, “and shew yourselves Men,—bring it again to Mind, O ye Transgressors! Remember the former Things of old, for I am God, and there is none like me.”—There is Nothing by which we shew ourselves Men, being endowed with Understanding

Reason, more than this;—this proves our Superiority over other Creatures, shews that our Minds can at Will arrest themselves in their Motions, and when useful, dwell upon an Object without an immediate Desire of Change;—And why are we not willing to maintain this Distinction? Is it not the Honor of our Nature to possess such a Power? Most certainly,—And if so, If we have such a Power, let us employ it as we ought;—let us not forget, that we are no more Lords of our own Life, than the original Author of it;—For God, who gave it, can and will take it when he pleases:—Let us consider this in our cool and retired Hours, and doubtless we will enter upon that Behaviour, which is most suitable to a Creature, who lives in such Uncertainties:—Our Life, may be a Life of Ease;—But is Ease to be preferred to Safety?—Whatever Charms may be in a Bed of Down:—Yet if the House is on Fire, who would not relinquish it?—There may
1. Pleasure in the Cup, but if it is mingled with Poison, who

that Values his Life, would drink it?—But to our Shame and Misfortune, we too often, for Want of a serious Consideration, drink the Cup of rankest Poison.—Men do not, nay, they will not consider, else the Temptations to sin would not be so very invincible;—And such Temptations once indulged, will always make good an Opportunity to solicit our Senses and excite our Desires.—The good and evil Things of the World are our very formidable Enemies:—Such as Riches and Poverty,—Pleasure and Pain,—Honor and Disgrace, Friendship and Enmity,—its Smiles and its Frowns:—These engross so much the Attention of the Generality of Mankind, that they seldom have leisure to think of Religion with any Degree of Seriousness.—But would Men consider these are far from irresistible Temptations.—What is the World, and pray what are we?—The World is narrow, but we are Creatures endowed with excellent Capacities;—Capacities that carry our Ideas far beyond an earthly Mass,—foresee the Dissolution

of this our temporary Prison of Clay, and see Heaven and eternal Bliss or, Misery before us:—Nay, the poor untutored Indian himself, sees God in Clouds, or hears him in the Wind.—Yes, he sees! admires! and obeys! And did we, who have greater Powers, only compare Earth with Heaven?—Time with Eternity, we would not then foolishly prefer Shadows to Realities,—Trifles to Things of infinite and everlasting Importance: Be assured, if we are not too fond of advancing our secular Interests, they will naturally Advance of themselves:—Indeed, a little Care, a little Pains are absolutely,—yet all that is really necessary.—We should, therefore, duly consider the Preeminence of a religious Life,—the End of a happy Reconciliation with God, and the Tendency of a timely Preparation for another World.—It must be confessed, the Concerns of the Body, more immediately touch our Senses;—but to make up for these Disadvantages, the others are of double Importance, more suitable to the spiritual Part of our Nature, and more worthy the Exercise of our

reasonable Powers;—Of this every Man may be easily convinced at the first Glance, and if he suffers himself to see it, he never will longer employ his Thoughts totally about, “What he shall eat, or what he shall drink, or where withal he shall be clothed,”—but rather about the Concerns of the Soul, and to labour strenuously for that Bread which endureth for ever.—However difficult this may be to us, at first, yet Custom will soon make it familiar;—the Way will grow smooth by Use, and our Thoughts and Actions will move in the Tract with more Pleasure and Delight;—Custom in common Affairs is said to be a second Nature, and there is no Reason to imagine otherwise, but that it will operate the same Way in religious Matters, if we only persevere, and not heedlessly relax and fall off.—Let us, therefore, not be discouraged in an Employment of so happy an Issue, and which, by Degrees, will become the greatest and most substantial Pleasure.—Let no Man deceive himself from vain Hopes, that God is merciful, and

therefore, will not condemn his Creatures to everlasting Punishment.—Every one is not an Object of Mercy, and consequently it would be inconsistent with infinite Justice to acquit such Objects unpunished;—though Mercy may be one Perfection of the divine Nature, yet Mercy, without Wisdom to guide, and Justice to limit it, would be no Perfection, but merely a blind and undistinguishing Affection.—True, God of his Mercy, "sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins,"—and "whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish;"—But consider, it is not every Faith that is saving, nor will Christ for his Glory, save Men in their Sins.—"The Devils believe and tremble."—Hence the Faith that shall be "counted to us for Righteousness," must be joined with Repentance, and followed with good Works.—These are the Fruits of an evangelical Faith.—Christ cannot possibly, though ever so merciful, be so great a Friend to Sin, as to suffer it unpunished.—Let us then, my beloved, let us seriously determine to lead holy Lives;—let us,

with holy David, sit down and consider, let us think on our Ways, and turn our Feet to the Testimonies of the Lord.—Only think, and the Work is soon performed, but without thinking, it can never be done;—It is by Means of Consideration, that we find out what we have to do, and how we must proceed towards our Conversion, and from thence towards the higher Degrees of Christian Perfection.—Thus we have a clearer Notion of Things, our Way lies plain before us, and we have no Danger of going astray through Ignorance or Mistake.—Consideration too, as it tells us what to do, so it quickens and persuades us to set about it.—There is a natural Tendency in serious Consideration, to awaken the drowsy and languid Powers of the Mind,—to bring over the Passions to the right Side, and when right, to make them vigorous in the Defence of it,—to fix the wavering Resolutions of the Soul,—and to revive its fainting Strength.—Let us not, therefore, deceive ourselves by a superficial Performance of our Duty;—A few slight and transient Thoughts about Things which belong to

everlasting Peace, do not even deserve the Name,—No, to consider, is to come close up to an Object, and to view it with all the Care and Exactness we possibly can.—If possible, to suffer Nothing to escape us of any Weight or Importance,—but to view every Thing often, thoroughly and steadily;—The Impression that may be hereby made, will be so deep, that Time cannot efface it;—while one single Thought or two, however serious and vivid, can signify but very little.—My beloved, then, in Time, consider, look at the Ox, he knoweth his Owner,—and behold the Ass, he well knoweth his Master's Crib.—Is it not a Shame, then, for rational Creatures to be more Ignorant than they?—Let us be ashamed, therefore, and by Faith and Meditation draw aside the Curtain, and view the invisible World, and there look for a Master, that will not fail to reward our Pains,—who will raise the Soul above the Sphere of sensible Objects,—guide it in the true Use of its Faculties;—and lastly, crown it with unspeakable immortal Yous.—Now to God the Father. &c. Amen.

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(No. 50.) 4th Chapter St. Matthew, Verse 10th.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The Occasion of these Words was owing to the many and importuning Temptations of the Devil upon the Divinity of our Saviour; at a Time too, when he, perhaps, thought he would be the most flexible to his cunning Arts; being, at that very Period, when he was led of the Spirit into the Wilderness, and where he fasted forty Days, and forty Nights;—During this Season the Devil often tempted him by various Means,—but to no Purpose;—Yet not content,—not satisfied with the Refusals he met with,—he still perseveres,—and even dares to lead the Son of the Living,—the Immortal, and one true God, to the Summit of an exceeding high Mountain, and there, in a Moment, to shew him all the Kingdoms of the World, and at the same Time to offer him

all these, as a Present, would he fall down and worship him;
—The Design,—the wicked Design of which Proposition,
our Blessed Redeemer well knew;—And immediately, in a
Manner peculiar to himself, thus gave him his final Answer,
—"Get thee behind me Satan,—for it is written, thou shalt
worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve."—
Here we see a most noble Precedent;—We see, that all the
Kingdoms and Glories of the World, were at once refused for
the Sake of Virtue and Religion:—Shewing, that the great
God of Heaven,—of the Earth, and all that is therein,
demands much more our Esteem and Regard, than the
Attainment of all the Joys, the Riches and Honors, that
Mortals could possibly enjoy or wish for;—Evidently so, when
we consider, what we well know, that one hundred Years will
inevitably lay the present Age in Dust and Ashes;—Serious,
dreadful Thought! Serious to think that all from the Dungeon
to the Throne, must one Day die, and that too in a very

short,—short Period:—And how dreadful, when we consider, that then we begin an Eternity of irreversible Happiness or Misery;—What in this State will a hundred, nay a thousand Years avail?—These ended, we shall still only be beginning more of the same Kind for ever and ever.—Think then, my beloved, oh think in Time!—What it is to neglect our Duty to God?—Think on what slippery Ground we stand, and how liable to fall:—Think how many Temptations we are exposed to, and how frail our Natures;—And above all, think often on the Consequence of an ill spent Life,—and how dear a momentary Joy may cost us!—That Maxim, “a short Life and a Sweet one,” which is often made use of by the Young and Thoughtless, is rash and dangerous.—Because, it is the express Will of God, that “we should rather embrace Virtue, though clad in Rags, than enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season.”—Let the Thoughtless take for granted, that if they do not use, but abuse their Time, they do

Nothing more, than lay a Foundation of everlasting Woe:—
I doubt not every one, even the most profligate and abandoned,
acknowledges the Being of a God; and that this Being is to be
duly worshipped,—That he is the Creator of all;—And the great
Judge, and final Determiner of all Events;—How strange
is it then to find, under this Knowledge and Assurance, so many
wicked Men still remaining upon the Face of the Earth:—
This must certainly proceed from the Want of a religious
Education in Youth, to teach them to put in Practice the Dic-
tates of natural Reason;—For if Children are obliged to at-
tend, duly, divine Service, the Duty will soon grow upon them,
and unanimes become their greatest Pleasure and Delight.—
If Parents would attentively observe this Line of Conduct;—
I am well persuaded the World would soon become much more
Religious, and consequently less addicted to deceive,—however we
could not fail of being less pestured with daring Thieves and
Robbers;—For a lively Sense of the Greatness, and Power of

God, awakens the Conscience, which makes Cowards of the most abandoned Villains;—and imprints this Sentence immediately upon their Minds,—“ Thus far shalt thou go and no farther, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.”—It seems then, from what has been said, as well as from the Words of the Text, that to worship God is the Foundation of all Morality.—Let us consider then, further, how he ought to be worshipped.—The first and second Commandments inform us, that there is none but one true God,—the Head and Governor of all, that really and truly commands or deserves our Adoration and Esteem;—It is to him alone, that every Honor is due;—Him alone and no other Object whatsoever should we serve.—To fall down to Wood or Stone,—to adore Saints or Angels,—bespeaks not only gross Idolatry,—but discovers a very faint Idea of the Gospel Dispensation:—To do this, we must have but a very poor Notion of the End of our Saviour's coming, whose entire

Business was to introduce a pure and spiritual Religion, and to do away the ceremonial Part of the Law.—Without such a Messenger, the World could never have had a true Idea of the Amiableness of Virtue, and its future Rewards;—For by him Life and Immortality were brought to Light,—and we were taught to apply immediately to God alone for Pardon and Forgiveness, and for a Share in the celestial Crown;—and to merit this, should be the main Object of all our Endeavours, and which is only to be procured by Humility, and a steadfast Obedience to the Will of God.—He requires us to be honest,—to be kind and affectionate one towards another,—to search out our own inward Depravities,—and carefully amend them;—This is the Way to pay that Attention to Omnipotence, which he seems chiefly to require in all his Works, and till we actually do these Things, we can have no just, or lively Sense of God's allruling Providence;—

^d St. Paul tells us, " That he who cometh to God, must both

believe that he is the only true God, and the Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him;" — Nay, it is evident from the Gospel, that it has been a peculiar Part of Christ's Errand among Men, to instruct them in this grand and important Truth,—to worship God alone,—and hence, to abolish that ridiculous, that impious Custom of falling down to Idols;—Things made with Hands, void of Life, and consequently void of every Thing that bespeaks a very Deity, from whom Nothing can be hid;—but indeed, God himself thus, by the Mouth of one of his Prophets, expostulates with the Jews;—"Is there," says he, "a God besides me?"—The Answer of the Prophet was plain and evincing, and bespoke the Dictates of honest Reason, and a good Heart;—He says, "Yea Lord, I know none other besides thee."—Since then, both Reason and Revelation declare, that there are no other Gods but one,—it follows, from hence, that we should always pay our first Court to him, to supply our Wants and Necessities,—it is he alone.

that can answer our Requests,—it is he only that can, and always does give us much more, than either we desire or deserve. — Let us, therefore, as it is our most bounden Duty, let us, according to the utmost of our Abilities, glorify God,—both by the outward Expressions of the Body, and the inward, and more significant Feelings of the Soul;—Nay, let our entire Dependence be upon him, for there is none else that is Half so willing to give, or mighty to save;—and when we arrive to such a Sense of Obedience, we shall be naturally led to exert our most vigorous Service in the Performance of our divine Offices;—We shall, from hence, find no other Pleasure equal to that of praising God, and following the exact Dictates of his Will,—Our Affections will all center in him, our chief Good, and we shall yearn, as it were, to be in the actual Enjoyment of his Kingdom and Glory;—Such it is, at once, to love,—fear,—honor,—praise,—and trust in Almighty God,—and such it is to live, as becomes Men and Christians;—for

thus, in the true Sense of the Words, "We shall truly love the Lord our God, with all our Hearts, with all our Souls, and with all our Strength, and our Neighbour as ourselves;"—On which Words, our Saviour tells us, "hang, or depend all the Law and the Prophets."—As to that Worship of any Thing visible, such as Images, Pictures, Relicks, &c. I shall only observe, that it is as absurd, as ridiculous, and equally as vain as idolatrous.—How very vain, on Observation!—For behold, how miraculously Daniel was preserved by the living God, from the hungry Jaws of devouring Lions.—To this Danger he was exposed, totally because he persisted in the Adoration of the one true God, and refused to follow the Decree of Darius, which was, "That no one should ask a Petition of any one God or Man for thirty Days, save of him;"—But Daniel, still steady to his Maker, and regardless of such ignorant, ineffectual, and worthless Impositions, "kneeled three Times a Day and prayed, and gave Thanks before his own God, as aforesaid,"—

And he soon proved, by his Deliverance, that there was none other like him, none so powerful, that could preserve us effectually from any imminent Danger or Distress;—and the End was truly as beneficial as miraculous, for the King, immediately after this Deliverance, ashamed at his Ignorance and daring presumptuous Folly, owned his Weakness, altered his Decree, and ordered, that in every Dominion of his Kingdom, Men should fear and tremble before the God of Daniel;—"for," says he, "He is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his Kingdom, that, which shall never be destroyed, nor his Dominion have an End."—Let us, then, my beloved, for ever follow this Decree;—let God be our only Hope and Trust, and then whether our Life is long or short, it will End in a still and serene Calm.—When the Struggles of reluctant Nature are over,—when the Soul launches into the invisible State, we shall quit the Field not Captives, but Conquerors,—and how happy, when we find ourselves thus situated, and surrounded by

guardian Angels, instead of weeping Friends;—here, the Realms of Woe, and Range of malignant Beings are left behind, and we arrive at the City of the living God, where a Voice sweeter than Music in her softest Strains, shall thus congratulate, and bespeak our Admission;—" Lift up your Heads, O ye Gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting Doors, that the Heirs of Glory may enter in."—May the Sun go thus down upon the Evening of our Days, may we thus close a Life, which at best is but a Round of Misery and Care, is my humble and sincere Wish, through Christ.—To whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. Amen.



X

(No. 51.)

90th Psalm, Verse 12th.

" So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our
Hearts unto Wisdom."

The Shortness, as well as "Uncertainty of
human Life, is what we all know, and what most of us
lament;—We know it from daily, nay hourly Examples;—
And lament it, because we cannot be at the Pains of preparing
for a Change; a Change that will come, and we know not
how, nor when:—While we have Life, we have still Hopes,
and still venture to put off the disagreeable Task of Repentance,
till the last Extremity;—For how few repent till Sickness
obliges?—How few recount their evil Ways,—till even Death
sends its Bill?—A Debt that must be paid,—here no Bail
will be accepted;—No Circumstances to excuse,—but an
unavoidable Prison awaits us,—the everlasting Doors of which
shall be shut to Eternity:—Would Men, therefore, only reflect,

—only think on this, sure then they would learn from hence to make a proper Use of that Time allotted them,—so that whether long or short, they might ever be prepared for Futurity, and ever apply their Hearts unto Wisdom;—But in Order to accomplish this End, it is very requisite, that we carefully number our Days, by God's special Assistance; i. e. we should constantly balance the Shortness of Life, with the Business therein to be transacted, and thus endeavour to employ it so, as most effectually to secure us our eternal and only valuable Interest:—This, in general, is the Duty implied in numbering our Days;—And can we be better employed, than in such an heavenly Business?—He who knows what Heaven means, must Answer in the Affirmative;—And he who is thoroughly sensible of the small Sum of Life, due to Mankind in general, must also see the Folly of drawing long Schemes of worldly Enjoyments;—Indeed, Nothing in the World shews the Weakness of Man so much, nor his

Disobedience to the divine Will, as an extravagant Pursuit of Riches and Honor;—Riches, the common Idol of the Covetous,—and Honor, the Deity of Ambition;—The covetous and ambitious Men, are those, who, in the immediate Sense of the Words, “eat the Bread of Carefulness,—rise early, and late take Rest;”—They, are those, who by the boundless Scope of their Designs, you would imagine, promise themselves Eternity upon Earth;—But surely, “Man thus walketh in a vain Shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up Riches, but cannot tell who shall gather them;”—For let a Man attain to any Height,—as far as his unreasonable Desires can possibly soar, yet it should never be forgot, that “God puts down the Mighty from his Seat, and lays his Honor in the Dust.”—It behoves us, therefore, to aim at no more than what we can really and comfortably enjoy;—Indeed what we do not comfortably, we do not really enjoy:—Hence, for a temporary Life, let us make a

temporary Provision; and for an eternal Life, eternal Provision.—A prudent Regard for a necessary Sustenance here, is all that is expected and allowed;—Then why be idly busy for that which is not worth our Care, nor ought to concern us?—This, according to our Saviour, is a Kind of Heathen Infidelity, and an heinous Distrust of Providence.—And further, the Consideration of our short Continuance upon this Stage, should be a sufficient Warning to us,—not only to refrain from an excessive Indulgence of earthly Pursuits, but particularly to avoid immoderate Grief for any material Loss, whether of Friends or Fortune.—The Mind should be so equipoised, as not to experience any very sensible Commotions either at the Enjoyments or Afflictions of Life:—Flights beyond this are, for the most Part, the Product only of enthusiastic Extravagance.—The Apostle St. Paul, teaches the Corinthians a very different Lesson;—Says he, "The Time, my Brethren, of our Duration here is short,—it remaineth

then that they, who weep, be as though they wept not, and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;—And they that buy, as though they possessed not.—And they that use this World, as not abusing it, “for the Fashion of the World passeth away.”—And is not this a very reasonable Practice, when, on Reflection, we find that the Cares of this World only sour the Soul and disqualify it, for a due Portion in the next?—For if the good or evil Things of this World make too great Impressions upon us, 'tis impossible we should have any relish for heavenly Joys;—And to depart in this State, involves us at once in a State of Misery, impossible to be described or imagined.—Would any Person then endowed with reasoning Faculties, so degrade the Dignity of human Nature, as thus to prefer Things temporal, to Things eternal?—A Man, who can absurdly imagine that after this Life ended, he shall sink into Nothing, may do it; because 'tis his Interest it should so happen,—knowing, that he has so abused thi

that he can expect no Blessings in that World which is to come.
—Nay, he well knows, that he has been so strict an Observer
of the Text of the Unbelievers, that he has never once deviated
from it,—“ Let us eat and drink, for Tomorrow we die;”
—And, therefore, he will not, nay he dare not reflect;—
For he deems it a full sufficient Time to think on the evil
Day, when it comes;—Indeed one would scarce believe there
were such Men upon the Face of the Earth, if our Eyes did
not convince us to the Contrary:—But we cannot survey the
most narrow Field of it, without finding many,—too many
lamentably Guilty.—But would Mankind throw off that
thoughtless Indifference about an eternal State which seems to
reign over them,—and think seriously on Futurity;—This
would give a Spring to all their Actions;—And can
they help this, if they ever consider the vast Devastation
daily made on a Man:—Lo,—both young and old,—the
and healthy, as well as those enfeebled by wrinkled

Age, all without Distinction fall a Sacrifice to the impartial, devouring, and unerring Hand of Death.—

Daily ^{Instances} Bills of Mortality convince us of this Truth, and consequently, show us the great Necessity of being constantly prepared for a future State.—Let us, then, my beloved, so learn to number our Days, as to apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.—Let us, in due Time, begin to rouse ourselves from that Lethargy, which keeps us blind to that Change, which may, in a Thousand different Ways, momentarily befall us;—and let us pay a just Attention to that Respect, which is due to the Reflection upon an Eternity of Bliss or Woe;—if this once thoroughly possesses the Soul, we shall fly on the Wings of these Hopes and Fears with incessant Speed,—and in full Stretch, and unwearied Steps, “Run the Race that is set before us,—flee from the Wrath to come,—and press forward eagerly to the Mark of our high Calling, to receive the Prize of eternal Life;—that Prize, which is diligently prepared for

those, who by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, Honor, and Immortality." — Again, those who would truly compute their Time, should in the Apostle's phrase, redeem and improve it to the best Advantage. — To redeem Time, indeed, in a natural Sense, is impossible, because the Days that are gone, are passed for ever, and cannot be recalled; — but in a moral Sense, we may easily regain it, by correcting the Errors of our former Conduct, and repairing those Damages we have received by it; — and this, through God's Grace, is very much in our Power; — by a sincere Repentance, and a Renovation of Acts and Manners, we become more than Conquerors over our Sins, even of the deepest Dye, and the Innocence we have lost may thus be regained; — But was this our own Merit; — No; — It was the Condescension of Christ, the sole Emblem of Mercy and Goodness, that descended from this heavenly Throne, and willingly, though severely, paid the Price of our Redemption; — and if we comply with the Terms of the Contract, we may

by these Means, and these only, redeem the Years we have spent in Vanity, and retrieve our Title to Happiness, that shall endure for ever;—and what can be more easy? The whole Contract is contained in this very short, but comprehensive Sentence, "Do, as you would be done by."—If then, as it behoves us, we would only imprint this Inscription on the Tablet of our Hearts, we never would do wrong, and we would anticipate, as it were, the real and substantial Joys of Heaven. —But how seldom, with Patience, do we see the Prosperity of others;—and how much more ready are a great many, rather to revenge than to forgive,—to distress and injure, rather than like the good Samaritan, assist a fellow Creature?—Yes, far too many at this Day are like, nay worse, than that certain Priest, who passed by on the other Side, for, if he did no Good, he, perhaps, imagined he did little Ill;—but some are now so vile, that they seem to rejoice in Mischief, and their Pleasures seem to increase with the Havock they make;—But let such

consider well the Uncertainty of Life, and that if they should in a Moment be summoned to Judgment, in the Midst of these Acts of wilful Sin,—let them consider how dreadful their Case must be, under the actual Danger of God's perpetual Indignation and Wrath,—Let us observe, that this Life is by no Means a Life of Duration, but barely a Scene of Action,—a State of Trial,—and a Passage to an unchangeable Eternity.—It is, therefore, our highest Wisdom to work out our Salvation, " while it is called to Day, for the Night cometh when no Man can Work, but all are doomed either to unspeakable Bliss or endless Misery;" —When we consider this, and when we consider that the Lamp of Life is subject to be extinguished by the smallest Breeze of Air;—Shall we, under these Assurances, defer a Work, on which our eternal Happiness depends?—A Work too, which cannot be performed without the Aid of this Lamp.—Too true, indeed, we vainly boast ourselves of To-morrow, and too often flatter ourselves with becoming more

religious in a few Years;—But alas! we know not what a Day, what an Hour, what a Moment may bring forth, the next Night may put a Period to our Hopes for ever;—and when we lie down in a careless Security, we may, perhaps, awaken on the Confines of Eternity;—This is a Consideration devoutly to be pondered in the Heart;—for from hence, no one ought to dare to sleep, till he had first reconciled himself with God;—and if he awakes on this Side the Grave, let him give Thanks unto God, who has allowed him one Day more to provide for his Salvation, and flee from the Wrath to come.—True, it is possible the Sinner may see old Age, and it is also possible, that the Grace of God may enable him to redeem the Years he has lost, and receive him to Mercy.—But how much more possible is it, that all these Schemes may miscarry, and how dreadful is the Event, if they do?—I shall only observe further, that “whoso is wise will ponder these Things, and learn to improve the Opportunities he has before him.—In a Word, let us

finally pray, that God may always so teach and assist us to number our Days, &c. &c.—To that Wisdom, which will teach us to manage the present Day, that we may have Something in Store for that which is to come;—to that Wisdom which will teach us to improve every Opportunity of Life, so that we may be enabled to pass the Waves of this troublesome World, and finally come to the Land of everlasting Life, where our Labour and Tears shall cease, and Sin and Sorrow be done away.—Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

x
(No. 52.) 5th Chapter. 1. Thessa. Verse 13th.

" And be at Peace among yourselves."

Every Man, when he considers the Product of mutual Agreement in Neighbourhoods or Families, must pronounce this an excellent Admonition;—Experience soon shows us the great Use of it, and natural Reason immediately confirms, what Experience thus declares,—(viz.) that, to be at Peace among ourselves, is a Blessing absolutely necessary for the general Happiness of Mankind:—Hence it is a Consideration that deserves our most serious Attention,—and, therefore, I shall endeavour to consider it in such Measure, as may tend both to our present and future Benefit.—Peace, in its full Extent, is both private and public,—between Man and Man,—or between joint and combined Societies of Men, securing, as much as possible, each other's Honor and Interest, and thereby preserving a general Happiness;—And if we

consult our natural Reason, it will tell us, that this is our absolute Duty, as only fulfilling the Dictates of the Law of Nature, which considered, antecedently to all humane Compacts and Agreements, is, by no Means, a State of War, but a State of Peace;—And if we view it further in Regard to Religion,—to ecclesiastical Government, of which Christ is the supreme Head, the Duty is still more powerfully enforced;—For this is diametrically opposite to all Wars, Seditions, and Tumults,—to all Schisms,—Separations,—and Divisions.—The Obligations then to live peaceably, in all Respects, are both great and interesting;—For if we look back upon ourselves,—and consider our natural Weakness and Inability, we will find, that we are far, very far, from being sufficient for our own Necessities;—To complete this, we require the Assistance of each other, which, without Peace, can never be accomplished;—Nor can we ever expect to enjoy here any tolerable Degree of Satisfaction or Happiness,—though, at the same

Time, we seem to enjoy every Ingredient necessary thereto;—
Nay, without Peace, all the Riches in the World would avail
Nothing,—and thus, in the Midst of Plenty, we should be
miserably poor,—wretched,—discontented and unhappy.—But,
let us remember, that God's principal Design in making
Man was, after exhibiting his own Glory, to render him
completely happy in a future State;—And to anticipate this,
to allow him to enjoy it in some Degree here.—For which
Purpose, we are sufficiently provided with every Requisite, and
need Nothing, but our own Endeavours to make Life comfort-
able and easy:—We are endowed with that noble Faculty of
Reason,—by which, we can clearly discover, that there
is Nothing in this World worthy so much our Care, as to make
us, by any Means, anxious about it:—We know that Perfec-
tion is not here, and therefore, it would be Madness to expect
pure Happiness, in a frail uncertain State;—And there-
fore to bear Afflictions with Patience, and to be content with

every Occurrence, adverse or prosperous, are the Dictates of Reason, and the Way to render Life as easy as possible on this Side Heaven.—And why be disturbed with Things we cannot remedy?—It is the Hand of God, therefore, let him do what seemeth him good;—And, after this,—what have we further to do? To live thus peaceably with ourselves, will naturally lead us to live in mutual Affection with our Neighbours too,—on which, our present and future Happiness chiefly depend.—Our great Business in the present Life is to render it as comfortable and pleasant to ourselves as we can;—We must wear out the Days of our Pilgrimage, with as little Trouble and Vexation, as possible,—and endeavour to spend the few Remains of a wasting Age with such Satisfaction and Composure, as not to dread the surrendering up of our Breath, at a dying Moment;—But where unnecessary and jarring Contests are encouraged,—Where Discords and Contentions influence the Will,—then this Privilege is taken

away:—Life becomes painful and burthensome, and Death still more disagreeable;—We hate to live, and are afraid to die, —because here is a continual Round of Quarrels and Dissentions, and consequently Enjoyment is totally lost;—And not Enjoyment only;—For where these engage the Attention, there is little Time in reserve to prepare for Eternity, and hence, we can have Nothing in View, but a Prospect of lasting Misery; and, therefore, Death, in this Case, becomes a very terrifying Subject, and we cannot contemplate upon it with any Degree of Satisfaction or Pleasure.—If we observe the body Politic, in its Progress, under the Influence of Discords and Contentions, we will find this equally hindered in its Prosperity,—as the Health of the Body natural is impaired by convulsive Pangs, or any other acute Disease:—Nay, if we look into private Families, where Discord is unfortunately begun and continued;—Yet, in spite of that natural Tie of Brother or Sister,—Father or Son,—we will see it always

attended with unprosperous Events, and frequently with Ruin itself;—If your own Observations are not sufficient to convince you of this serious Truth;—Let me beg your Attention to our Saviour's Authority upon this Maxim;—Says he, "A House divided against itself cannot stand;"—Nor, he further affirms, can a Kingdom, under the same Circumstances, continue.—Thus we see the absolute Necessity of being at Peace in general, in Order to preserve our temporal Happiness and Prosperity;—whether it only concerns Families; or extends itself to larger Bodies or Societies of Men.—Again, if we consider Peace in Respect to the great Concerns of another Life;—the Obligations to it will still appear more forcible and necessary, than in this our present State of Existence.—Observe, the Foundation of future Happiness is a religious Course of Life;—and pray, how can Religion be supported where Uniformity and Harmony are not attended to?—What spiritual Comfort will result, where a composed and heavenly Temper ~~are~~^{is} not

preserved?—What Mind, that is perpetually ruffled with the Storms of Passion, can ever settle to the calmer Acts of Worship and Devotion?—To say this was possible, would betray the dullest Understanding, and the grossest Ignorance;—for Reason tells us, there cannot be greater or more powerful Adversaries to pious Resolutions and laudable Actions than these;—and Revelation declares, that true Religion and Contention can never agree or inhabit the same Breast.—Hence, we may justly conclude, that to be peaceable among ourselves, is absolutely and essentially necessary to secure eternal Bliss;—nay, so great are the Obligations to Peaceableness and Unanimity, that without them we must bid adieu to all Enjoyment in this Life;—and it would be an Insult upon the Justice of God, ever to expect a Share in his Kingdom;—How does it behove Mankind, therefore, and particularly those, who call themselves Christians, to set a Bias upon their Inclinations and Intentions;—a Bias strong and powerful

enough to draw us to the Love and Practice of Peace;—and sufficiently weighty to preponderate on the Side of Friendship, to keep the Mind in an even Poise,—an equal Balance,—and calm Posture;—and to encourage us to do this, let us further consider the Reasonableness and Excellency of preserving Peace,—Unity,—and Concord among ourselves.—Now where Men are so disposed in their Hearts, as to be at Peace one with another, we will naturally see Dispositions emulous to excel in doing good;—Hearts like these will seize every Opportunity to show their Integrity to each other, and to promote, as much as possible, the general Interest;—Indeed, it is impossible they should do otherwise, because they are entirely free from those bad and destructive Qualities, the Fomentors of Disputes, and all Differences between Man and Man;—In the good Heart, neither false Ambition, Envy, Malice, nor Revenge are to be found;—Here are no irregular Lusts or Passions encouraged, but a Desire after those noble Pursuits,

that dignify and polish human Nature, and give the Man an actual foretaste of the Pleasures of Heaven, even upon Earth;—whereas, the Man of the World, who is totally governed by a self-interested Principle, has too much to do with his own little private Concerns, to devote any Time or Pains to the Promotion of the general Good;—if his own Affairs are right, he little regards whose are wrong, or how confused others are, if his own Projects are accomplished, though at the enormous Expence of his Neighbour's Ruin, by Loss of Property or Credit;—while the peaceable Man, to promote the Benefit of those around him, stops not at any Danger or Difficulty to secure them that which will make them comfortable and easy.—Again, Peace has not a greater or oftentimes a more powerful Enemy than a false Pride;—it becomes more powerful when supported by Riches, and, in this Case, is truly a most formidable Opponent to Meekness and good Temper;—Here, Pride is never at ease, it quarrels

with itself, and all the World;—for if a proud Man of this Kind, sees any above him, he envies their Situation;—and those below him, he expects to be all Submission to his extravagant Folly and unreasonable Demands;—But, in such Measure, as it is impossible for human Nature to support or submit to;—and here, likewise, he is thwarted in his Desire, and hence becomes all Anger and Fury, full of Resentment, if not Revenge;—He forgets that there is any such Quality as Peace, and thus becomes the constant Slave of Mischief and Discontentment.—Was it not this, (a false Pride) that drove Satan out of Heaven, who, on this Account, still continues the bitterest Enemy to the Salvation of Man?—Whose only Pleasure is to foment Disputes, raise Enmities and Dissentions, and infuse Jealousies into the Minds of Men;—Dispositions that never fail to disturb our Peace, and make us at perpetual War among ourselves.—Since, then, without Peace, there is no Happiness here, and little Hopes of it

hereafter;—let us carefully pursue it in every Step we take, for, on Examination, we find it founded on the very best of Qualities, and productive of the most satisfactory Events.—It was always the Practice of our Saviour, and was a Part of all his Exhortations to his Followers;—Nay, it was the very last Legacy he bequeathed to his Disciples,—says he, "Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give to you;"—and he further earnestly prays his Father to preserve this Spirit of Peace and Unity among Christians to the End of the World, doubtless knowing, that it was the only Method to preserve and support unblemished his most holy Religion, and secure our present and future Happiness;—and as this is a certain and indisputable Truth,—let us begin this Day, and resolve, as long as Time exists, to live peaceably with all Mankind;—and which, that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant: to whom with the Son and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. Amen.

